THE PLAYSTATION 3 MAGAZINE

PSM3

March 2010
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UK's No.1 PlayStation Magazine

EXPOSED

GOD OF WAR 3

Why it's only possible on PS3 - page 8

Extended Play section

Ten most outrageous moments in Sega's eclectic Bayonetta

Revealed: PS3's most evil corporations

Plus MORE

WELCOME

Fallout NEW VEGAS

15

REVIEWED

HEAVY RAIN
FINAL FANTASY XIII
DANTE'S INFERNO
MAG
MORE...

In Vegas, even the apocalypse is a party...

Exclusive first-look: only in PSM3

GRAN TURISMO 5

It's in 3D and out... *when?* Every fact and detail inside

PLUS

Red Dead Redemption | Game cakes | Just Cause 2
Assassin's Creed 2 DLC | Aliens vs Predator More...

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Team Intro

The first and last word in PS3 games

PSM3'S PROMISE

Fact. Opinion. That's our mantra. We say 'no' to waffly, indulgent, previews and deliver what matters. We know games cost £50, and our hard-hitting, expert, reviews reflect that simple fact. No mag gives you more new games, or does more to champion innovative, off-radar, potential classics. If you love games, and want more from your PS3, we'll get along just great.

"With so many good PS3 games, here's where to start..."

"Ammo. Magic. Health. Games make us experts in asset juggling, but in real-life it's never easy to ration our most precious commodity – time. Do you spend your spare hour/day/week mastering *Bayonetta* (for the, er, nun outfit on page 103)? Getting emotionally involved in *Heavy Rain* (review on page 80)? Watching that Blu-ray box set you've always fancied (is it wrong to watch *five* Battlestar Galacticas back to back)? Reading an improving book? That's where PSM3 comes in. Our 100 page 'Best of the PSN' book shortcuts you to the best games, demos and videos, without labouring through fiddly menus. We're only interested in quality – so when we back a potentially 100 hour game like *Fallout: New Vegas*, you can be sure it's a big deal. Enjoy the issue."

Daniel Dawkins Editor psm3@futurenet.com

In the making of this issue of PSM3...
50 hours of Final Fantasy XIII played.
2 boxes of M&S Jaffa Cakes consumed.
285 seconds of new GOW footage watched.

If you only read three things in this issue...

Fallout: New Vegas

We explore the new wasteland and reveal its secrets. Read the world's first preview of Bethesda's epic post-apocalyptic sequel on page 22.

Final Fantasy XIII

Square Enix's million-selling RPG series makes its first appearance on PS3, and we've finished it. Brace yourself for a shocking truth on page 66.

The death of the J-RPG?

Then turn to page 58 for an in-depth look at the Japanese role-playing genre, its fading influence in the West, and what the future holds.

March 2010: The highs and lows of making this month's PSM3

- Being the first magazine in the world to see *Fallout: New Vegas* being played.
- Bath is beset by more snow. The office closes. No work gets done.
- Dan gets obsessed with Battlestar Galactica. Suspects Owen might be a Cylon.
- *Final Fantasy XIII* is reviewed, and scores a totally unexpected 70%.
- Owen and Andy set up a private Google Talk chatroom to debate which PMC to go in *MAG*. SVER wins.
- Owen takes a place in the first ever public *MAG* match and makes friends with random Americans.
- Sega admit the constant loading breaks in the PS3 verison of *Bayonetta* are ridiculous. Hint at patch, but no promises.
- Dan vs. Everyone Else: the *Assassin's Creed 2* debate rages on.
- *Just Cause 2*'s amazing in-game YouTube recording feature. More games need this.

PSM3

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A world of games at a glance

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Go to page 56 NOW!

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"The series has come a long way since Fallout 3"

Fallout: New Vegas 22

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On The DVD

Flippable DVD action

THE DUAL-SIDED DISC

Side A:
See the latest game trailers – works on any DVD player

Side B:
See real HD movies on your PS3 plus saves, themes, more

DVD Highlights Saves, videos, themes

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15
HD Movies
TRAILERS God of War 3 | Aliens Vs Predator | Heavy Rain | Battlefield: Bad Company 2
Gran Turismo 5 | Just Cause 2 | Final Fantasy XIII | Red Dead Redemption | UFC 2010 | More

How to... Use everything on Side B of the disc

PS3 GAME SAVES How to use PS3 game saves

Step 1 Insert a USB stick into your computer and make a folder on it called 'PS3', then one inside called 'SAVEDATA'. Drag the saves you want into here.

Step 2 Insert the stick into your PS3, go to 'Game' then 'Save Data'. Click on the USB device, then copy the saves you want by pressing △ on the game's folder.

Step 3 And that's it. Simply load up the game, and you'll be able to use our game save. But is it as satisfying as playing honestly? Is it?

HD VIDEO FILES

Step 1 Insert Side B of the disc into your PS3, then click across to 'Video' on the cross-media bar (XMB). Select the disc and press △.
Step 2 Choose 'Display All' from the menu, and then highlight all the trailers you want to copy and download them to your hard drive.
Step 3 View the trailers in your videos list.

PS3 THEMES

Step 1 Insert a USB stick into your computer. Create a folder on it called 'PS3'.
Step 2 Create a folder inside called 'THEME' and copy the themes you want into it.
Step 3 Put the USB stick into the PS3, locate the 'System' menu, then 'Themes'. Choose 'Install' and 'Select USB Device'. The themes will install.

PS3 WALLPAPERS

Step 1 Find the wallpapers folder on side B.
Step 2 Make a folder on a USB stick called 'WALLPAPER' and copy your chosen wallpapers to it (or select all of them). Put the USB stick in your PS3.
Step 3 Access the USB stick. You'll see your chosen wallpapers. Select one, press △ again, then ⊗ to set it as wallpaper, and 'Options' to crop it.

Faulty disc? Send it to Disc Replacement, Reader Support, Future Publishing Ltd, Bath, BA1 2BW

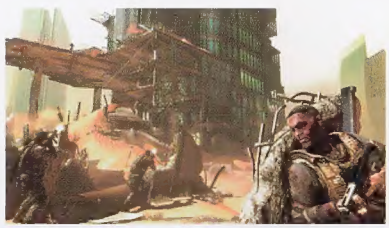
3 things to watch first this month

Medal of Honor

EA go straight for *COD*'s jugular with their own modern, Middle Eastern FPS.

Arkham Asylum 2

The Joker returns in the sequel to the best superhero game of all time.



Spec Ops: The Line

The ruins of sandstorm-blasted Dubai become a warzone in this shooter.

PLUS!

PSM3 Podcasts

You do podcasts? Where can I get them?

Although you can find our podcasts on iTunes and on psm3mag.com, you can also get a selection of recent podcasts on Side B. Go to the 'Podcasts' folder to hear them. They're MP3 format, so will work on PC, Mac, iPod and your PS3.

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Frontline

Hard news, all Pla[illegible]

HIGHLIGHTS

Why Trophies are the Devil's work
BioShock 2 splits opinion
Hands-on with *Aliens vs Predator*

"The battle is taking place on the back of a Titan as it climbs Olympus"

Why God Of War III is only possible on PS3

Devs reveal how Sony's violent, mega-budget sequel pushes PS3 to its limits

Like I just saw a PlayStation 4 title", is how forthright US journalist HipHopGamer described the secret footage of Kratos battling the 'Spider-horse' boss in *God Of War III*. With less than a month to *GOW*'s March 19 release, we've seen the same footage and can confirm that – while not quite as astonishing as you might expect of a PlayStation 4 game – Kratos' PS3 debut is a technical showcase.

What's so special about Kratos' battle with the 'Spider-horse' boss; resembling a horse's head with huge insectoid limbs? The intensity is staggering, but what really impresses is its 'living' torso made of rushing water and – above all – the fact that the battle is taking place on the back of a Titan as it climbs Mount Olympus. When the camera scales back, the huge boss becomes a blur, while Kratos is barely bigger than a pixel – yet, amazingly, you're still in control.

"Dynamic environments mean we can take literally anything in the game, including creatures or in this case, extremely large thousand foot plus creatures," reveals Sony Santa Monica's John Hight, "And turn them into an environment that Kratos can now navigate, battle on, find treasures". The idea was mooted during *God Of War* on PS2, but only PS3's technology allowed the developers to build it. A similar technique was employed by Naughty Dog in *Uncharted 2*, but Hight claims *GOW3*'s approach is more advanced. "Ours is a soft body collision which allows us to take any organic

"It's the end of the trilogy, capping off the story"

Stormy Seas The level takes place on the back of rocky titan Gaia, with epic real-time camera zooms.

God of phwoar Kratos is so tiny you can barely see him, but still in your complete control.

£110 for an angry box?

***GOW3* Ultimate Edition blows minds, wallets**

Committed Kratos fans with large spare rooms – and / or extremely forgiving loved ones – can pre-order the *GOW3* Ultimate Edition for an ungodly £110. Crack open the authentic (ish) treasure chest – try holding ◻ at the same time for the full effect – to reveal: a copy of *GOW3* on PS3, a copy of *God of War Collection* (the PS2 games remastered in HD), extra PSN content (including a Combat Arena with seven challenges); plus Dominus, Apollo, Phantom of Chaos, Forgotten Warrior character skins, exclusive PSN video content, the GOW Trilogy soundtrack and... an artbook and some postcards. We'll stick to the regular game, thanks.

character, and turn it into a level. We've been working on it for almost two years".

Secret and safe

Sony want to keep much of the game secret, for fear of spoilers. "I've seen a lot of film trailers, that when you see the finished movie, feels like you've put the ten commercials together", reveals *GOW3*'s director Stig Asmussen, "That's why we haven't put out a ton of screens". Asmussen reveals that scale will play a big part in scenes dubbed the Great Caverns with huge wooden crates hanging in an open room. The Caverns will be one big puzzle, where you construct something to unlock an even more elaborate set of puzzles.

More intriguingly, as Kratos scales Mount Olympus, you'll get to explore the home of the gods in all its glory, including the lush Olympus Gardens, a place of beauty where the gods go to reflect. Sony aren't ruling out running the whole game in 3D – but only via a download patch later in the year. "I know that it's something we could do – not incredibly complicated" reveals Asmussen, "It would kind of be like looking in on a small world living in your TV." GOW's technical prowess reflects in its native 720p resolution, with a variable frame rate between 30-60 frames per second, depending on the intensity of the scene. *GOW3*'s dynamic lighting is only possible due to the processing power of PS3's Cell SPU

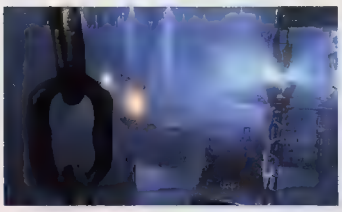
"The world will look massively 'Blade Runner'"
Deus Ex 3 page 13

Watch out for The 'Spider-horse' bo... uses pincer attacks and huge ... drills, but they're eas...

Path to Olympus

New locations, bosses revealed

In for the grill Hades kicked a titan's ass in *GOW2*, but now Kratos has to take him down.



Crate expectations The Great Caverns is scene to a big puzzle, guarded by cyclops'.

Hammer time These stone giants patrol the Olympus Gardens, where the gods relax.

Flip service The action flips mid-battle, with Kratos hanging on for dear life on the titan's hand.

chips. "The High Dynamic Range (HDR) lighting technology – when using Kratos' sightline – will emulate the human retina, causing players to feel a sharp brightness when Kratos leaves a dark area and enters a sunlit area similar to how the human eye adjusts", reveals *GOW3* UK Product Manager Claire Backhouse, adding that the game is only possible on PS3.

The soundtrack's equally lavish, recorded at Skywalker Sound and remotely in Prague (via a link up), and spanning 26 hours of brass, 12 hours of strings, 20 hours of choir vocals, cut and compressed into – we can confirm – *GOW3*'s duration of over 10 hours. Why use a live orchestra? "Samples are good, but you miss the emotion... even though it's mostly angry emotions in *GOW3*", quips Composer Cris Velasco.

Technical issues aside, it's still a game about ripping foes in half, as perma-furious anti-hero Kratos scales Mount Olympus to settle his dispute with the gods once and for all... well, for now. "It's certainly the end of the trilogy, capping off the story we started in *GOW*", confirms John Hight, "But we're not going to let the franchise go, just like that. We're going to be careful about what we do next, and make sure we have something interesting to tell". What exactly? One theory is that Kratos' abandoned brother will take the limelight but either way, it's less likely to look, than be, a PlayStation 4 game. Until then, the wait for *GOW's* UK debut is as tantalising as ever – and we'll have the full review next issue.

STOP PRESS!
As we type, reports are filtering back from US journalists who've finished the game for early reviews. Word is, that it's everything you'd expect, but not a dramatic reinvention – so just one of the best looking games of all time where you tap ⓐ a lot, then. Get our verdict next month.

Pub Sony | **Dev** SCEA | **ETA** March 19

The Opinionator

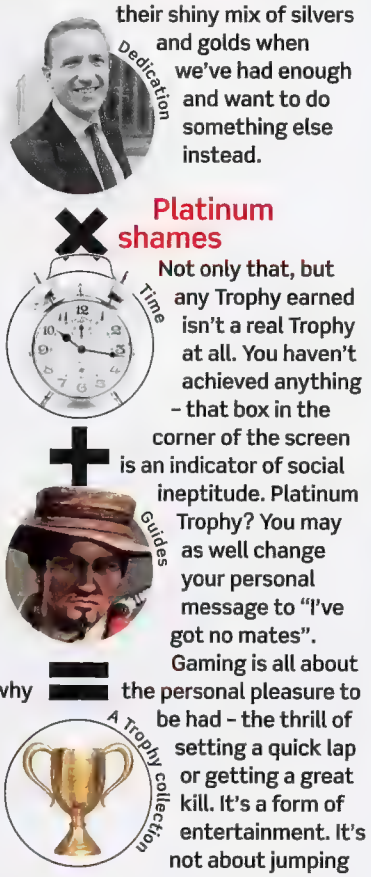
"Sorry, but Trophies are a shameful waste of time"

Ah, Trophies. Nothing quite beats the thrill of that little dialog box of success popping up in the corner, letting you know that the fourth playthrough didn't go entirely to waste.

That's what they want you to think. The harsh reality is that Trophies are an epic waste of valuable game time. Whether it's scouring for shard fragments in *inFamous* or finding every treasure in *Uncharted 2*, those little badges are an endless bane, guilting you into squeezing every last drop of play time from each title on your shelf.

You might think that's a good thing. The truth is, there's only one real reason why we stop playing a good game – we get bored of it. Whether that's because we've simply had enough, or because a sexier, younger model has come along. If we swap the disc, we're ready to move on.

Trophies go against this fundamental law of gaming, which has existed since those discs were cartridges. They nag at us with their incompleteness, shame us for our lack of effort and generally try to tempt us away from other titles with their shiny mix of silvers and golds when we've had enough and want to do something else instead.



Platinum shames

Not only that, but any Trophy earned isn't a real Trophy at all. You haven't achieved anything – that box in the corner of the screen is an indicator of social ineptitude. Platinum Trophy? You may as well change your personal message to "I've got no mates".

Gaming is all about the personal pleasure to be had – the thrill of setting a quick lap or getting a great kill. It's a form of entertainment. It's not about jumping through hoops to make flashing your e-penis more impressive among your fellow time-rich, friend-poor forum-goers. Play your way and enjoy it while it lasts. **Alex Evans**

Myth-Buster

SEEN THIS?

DJ Hero was a commercial flop

THE TRUTH

Activision's DJ party game didn't flop... but proved a, er, mixed success. For some reason, many websites revelled in the fact that *DJ Hero* entered the UK charts at number 20. Keen to stick the boot into Activision, who had controversially upped the RRP of *Modern Warfare 2* to £55, many saw this as karma making a nice dent in the mega-publisher's finances. Well, according to the NPD (the people who track sales in the US) *DJ Hero* generated more revenue than any other original game last year. That's *revenue*, not sales, mind – so while the £100-ish *DJ Hero* raked in more cash than any other new game (with unit sales of 789k in the USA), it was comfortably out-sold by *Borderlands* (1.1m units) and *Dragon Age: Origins* (1.14m). Either way, *DJ Hero 2* is a certainty in late 2010.

Sand castles *Spec Ops* is set in the ruins of Dubai, which has been ravaged by violent storms.

Thrill List

No hype. No filler. The top five new games we're *really* excited about

1 Spec Ops: The Line

Apocalypse Now in the desert

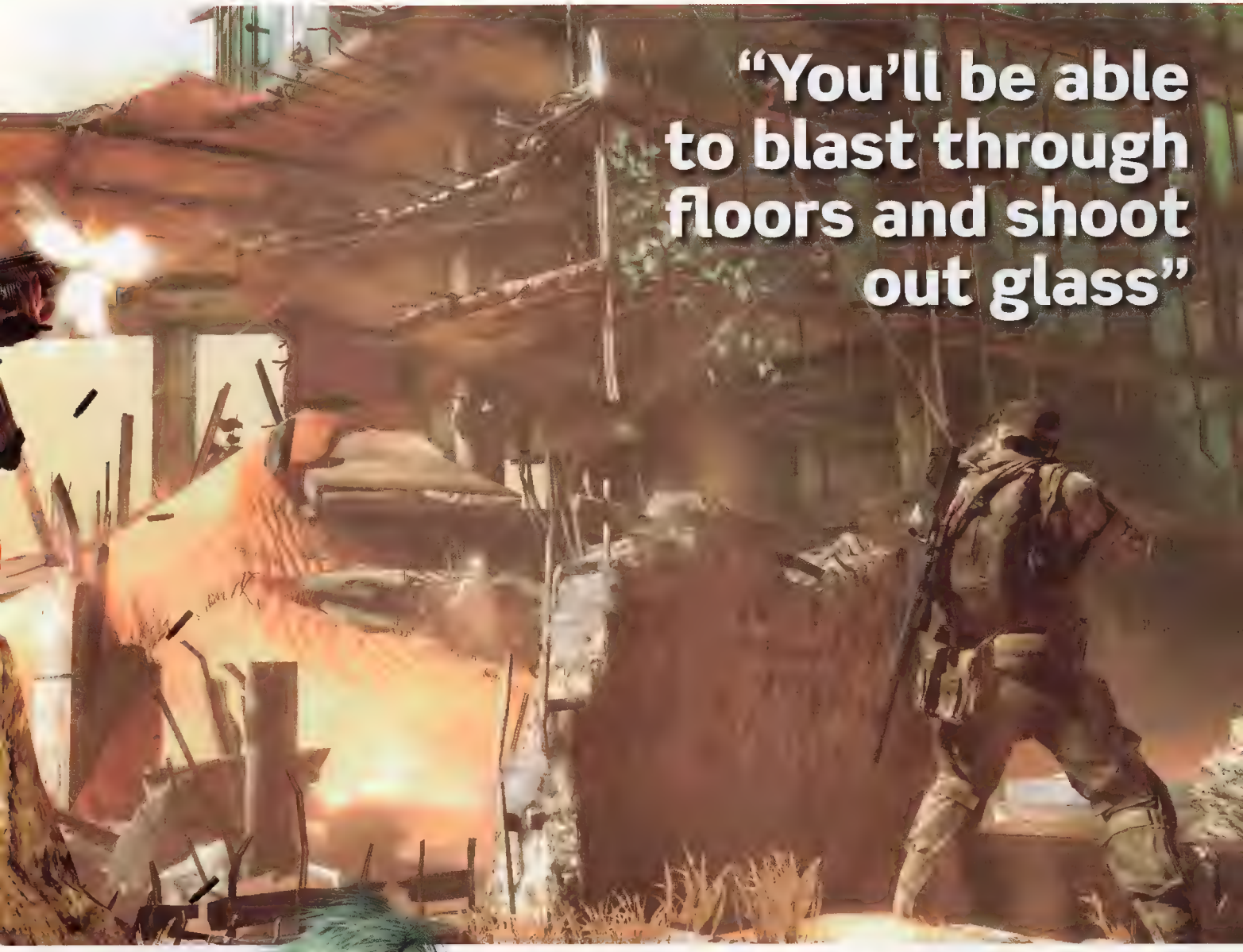
The first footage of *Spec Ops* looks hot, but the real interest is the setting. It's a retelling of Apocalypse Now, set in a sandstorm-wrecked Dubai. Here you're scrapping as the leader of a three-man Spec Ops squad sent in to remove a former colonel who has assumed control of the ruined city.

Fire-fights will take place inside wrecked skyscrapers, and you'll be able to change the environment by blasting through floors and shooting out glass. Also promised are *Ghost Recon*-style squad commands and five-on-five multi-player, but – because the story is focused on your squad going through an emotional journey – no co-op.

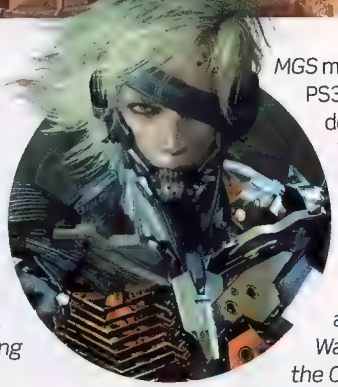
Pub 2K Games | **Dev** Yager | **ETA** Winter

As you progress, the game sees you hunting down a renegade colonel.

"A new Ghost Recon game is imminent"
The Insider page 14



"You'll be able to blast through floors and shoot out glass"



2 Metal Gear Solid Rising

Set to sizzle

What's new with the next *MGS*? Everything points to a big reveal at this year's E3 Games Show in June, so don't expect to see much new before then. It's safe to assume *Rising* will fill in the plot holes between *MGS 2* and *4*, and will star Raiden in some capacity. We say 'some capacity' because the money is on this being a more action-focused *MGS*, which could see us filling the cyber-suit of ninja Raiden for some 'Lightning Bolt Action'.

Pub Konami | **Dev** Kojima Productions | **ETA** 2011

3 Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

Hideo nasty

Good news for anyone looking forward to this *Castlevania* reboot overseen by *MGS* man Kojima – it seems PS3 is the game's lead development platform. That means we won't get the same kind of second-rate porting Sega coughed up with *Bayonetta* and, as this is looking to be a fast-paced, *God of War*-meets-*Shadow of the Colossus* style action game, that's quite a big deal.

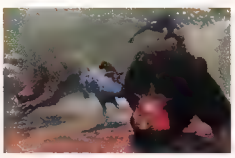
Pub Konami | **Dev** Mercury Steam | **ETA** Autumn

4 Rage

Go mad for it

id Software – creators of *Doom* and *Quake* – are now property of Bethesda (*Fallout* / *Oblivion*). This in turn means *Rage*, their revolutionary, post-apocalyptic FPS, has now moved from the EA stable to Bethesda. While this isn't a particularly fascinating fact, it does mean that during our trip to see *Fallout: New Vegas* we managed to get a feel for how the company see *Rage* and they're excited. They see it as something that looks a significant cut above other games, and reckon it could be the next step up for shooters.

Pub Bethesda | **Dev** id | **ETA** 2011



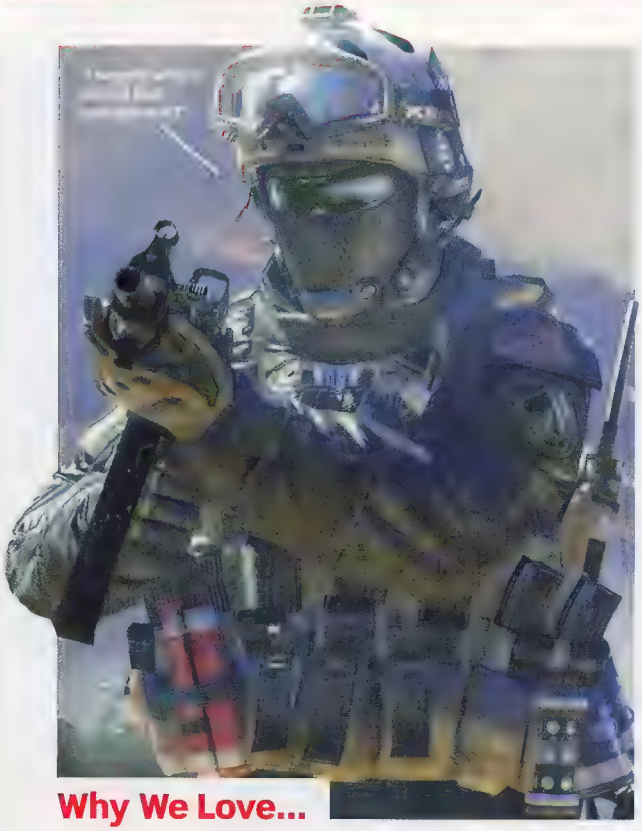
Anger management Bethesda have high hopes for *Rage* following their takeover of id.

5 Deus Ex 3

Blade Runner meets *Fallout*

This third game in the *Deus Ex* world is due for a proper, full-fat unveiling next month. We know you play as a security guard and the world will look massively 'Blade Runner' with grimy streets lit up by neon billboards. Odder, rumours cite Xbox action title *Crackdown* as an influence...

Pub Square Enix | **Dev** Eidos | **ETA** Winter



Why We Love...

Linearity

Because there's nothing wrong with walking the line

How can less freedom be good?

A lot of developers seem to think that a bigger world means a better game. Taking some of the choice away from the player can give developers the freedom to tell a more interesting story and craft a polished and spectacle-packed campaign.

Imagine the mess that an open-world *Modern Warfare* would be – it's difficult enough maintain a high level of quality over the scripted, five-hour campaign – to expect the same quality in a game where you can go anywhere would be unrealistic.

But some games give you both.

You're right: some titles, like *BioShock*, manage to deliver a compelling narrative in a largely open world, but they're the exceptions rather than the norm. With such tight deadlines for developing games, it's often an either/or situation. We don't need every game to feature an enormous world, anyway – it might be fun to explore the lush jungles of *Monkey Island*, but we play it for the clever puzzles and witty dialogue. Without rigorous linearity holding those together, everything would fall apart. Linearity can be exhilarating if you're led by a team that knows how to make the most of it.

A brief history

Previous games *Dead Space, Modern Warfare 2, Uncharted 2*

Future games *Final Fantasy XIII, God of War 3, Dead Space 2, Prince of Persia: Forgotten Sands*

The Insider

He's the man who knows too much...

Bethesda are working on not one, but two, 'secret' MMOs – neither of which are to be confused with the hotly rumoured *Fallout* MMO, codenamed **V13**, which is currently the subject of a legal dispute with Interplay. Our sources suggest we're more likely so see an MMO dubbed '*Gears of Warcraft*' – read into that as you will, but a sci-fi setting sounds likely – plus, potentially, another MMO set in the **Elder Scrolls** universe.

Sony's motion controller looks certain to be called 'Arc', after they registered a domain name with the same name. The device has been officially delayed until Autumn, presumably until more software is available. Will the motion wand work with 3D PS3 games? It's a "no brainer' according to Sony's Senior Development Manager Simon Benson. Three-dimensional **Killzone 3(D?)** fantasies aside – expect more on Guerilla's FPS sequel over the next few months – we'd welcome 3D snooker, where you hit 'real' balls, or Minority Report-style menu and object interaction. More soon.

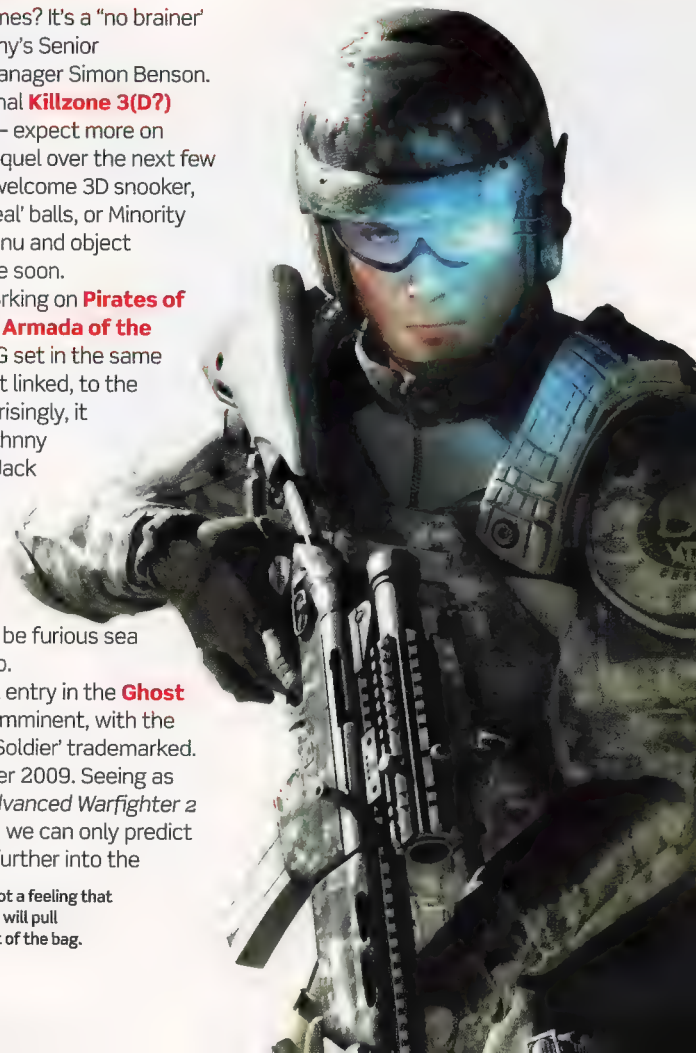
"Bethesda are working on two secret MMOs"

Disney are working on **Pirates of the Caribbean: Armada of the Damned**, an RPG set in the same universe, but not linked, to the films. More surprisingly, it won't feature Johnny Depp's Captain Jack Sparrow, but fringe characters like Tia Dalma, who is revealed in the movies to be furious sea goddess Calypso.

Ubisoft's next entry in the **Ghost Recon** series is imminent, with the subtitle 'Future Soldier' trademarked. back in December 2009. Seeing as *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2* was set in 2014, we can only predict it'll be set even further into the war-torn future. All being well, more next month.

EA's **Crysis 2** is confirmed for a New York setting, with a lovingly rendered Central Park – the abundance of skyscrapers seen by some as a cute way to hide the potential 'draw distance' issues that its previous, open world, jungle would've presented on console, now that the game no longer leads on PC. Another PC-turned-console shooter is due a high profile sequel, with a big name attachment... but we're sworn to secrecy. For now.

A sequel to **Tony Hawk: Ride** is in the works, but it may be a snowboarding or surfing game and, as such, more ideally suited to Activision's board peripheral than, ironically-ish, skateboarding itself. **DJ Hero 2**, as confirmed by DJ David Guetta, will seek further endorsements, with DJ QBert in the frame. Quickies? Expect Rockstar's **LA Noire** to surface any day.



Ghost Return We've got a feeling that the *Ghost Recon* crew will pull something special out of the bag.

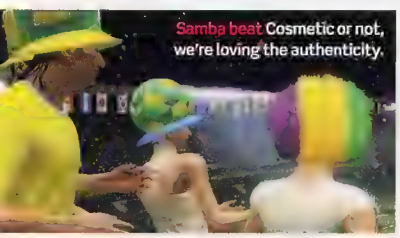
"Toying with Splicers is more satisfying than ever"
BioShock 2 page 16

Win the World Cup

FIFA World Cup hopes to break 'lazy spin off' curse, but...

Good news, odd news. EA's *FIFA* is being revamped for a full-price, boxed, World Cup edition, but, PSM3 can reveal, the game was originally planned as DLC; at least, if our early review code of *FIFA 10* can be believed.

Secret hopes of a pocket-friendly, cynic-defying, £20 DLC update dashed, we can look forward to an exemplary licensed World Cup game, leading one of 199 teams, from qualification to final glory. Expect ten official stadiums, 'colourful' Brazilian fans plus new Home and Away tactics; weaker sides play defensively, but raise their game at home. The South African climate will even affect ball physics, and players will tire more at altitude. The highlight's a full online World Cup tournament, with player stats contributing to a Battle of the Nations leaderboard. DLC or not, it's certain to play incredibly well, and the authenticity is assured.



Samba beat Cosmetic or not, we're loving the authenticity.

Pub EA | **Dev** EA | **ETA** Summer 2010

Is Bioshock 2 better than the original?

The return to Rapture sparks another heated team debate

The PSM3 Debate

YES: IT'S A FAR BETTER FPS, AND THE STORYLINE DOESN'T FADE OUT TOWARDS THE END

Don't get me wrong: *BioShock* is one of my favourite games of all time. But it's clear that it's far from perfect. As a shooter it feels lightweight and archaic, and the narrative slows to an unsatisfying crawl in the final chapters after the 'Would you kindly?' reveal. These are two things the sequel noticeably fixes.

Combat is now taut and dynamic, thanks to hugely improved AI and the simple, but game-changing, decision to let the player wield Plasmids and weapons at the same time. Toying with the Splicers is more satisfying than ever thanks to the wealth of tonic, weapon and Plasmid combos, and they're smarter playmates, using the environment against you.

And the story, while riffing on similar themes as its predecessor, is more cleverly told. No level ever feels like it's dragging on thanks to better pacing, and the story reveals are frequent and fascinating. The morality system is more engaging too. The choices are still binary in themselves, but have further-reaching consequences.

2K Marin spent a lot of time analysing the original *BioShock*, figuring out what it did well, and improving on that. And they had no qualms about getting rid of things they felt marred the experience, like the intrusive 'Pipe Mania' hacking mini-game. So while the sequel doesn't feel as radical as the original did when it was released, it's been improved in the areas that count. **Andy Kelly**

Andy Kelly is Features Editor on PSM3. He saved every Little Sister in the game and managed to bag the good-guy ending.

NO: THE SEQUEL JUST DOESN'T HAVE THE SAME IMPACT AS THE FIRST BIOSHOCK

I think it all boils down to one thing – you only get one chance to make a first impression. The initial descent down the bathysphere. The first time you come face-to-dismembered face with a splicer. The first time you hear a Big Daddy clunking down a hallway. *That* splicer with the pram. The disturbing imagery on the walls of Dr Steinman's office. *That* reveal. These are the moments people will talk about ten, twenty, even fifty years from now.

BioShock 2 is a well crafted sequel with a beautiful and poignant storyline, but it really is just a supplemental to the first story. The original *BioShock* was the visionary. We came into Rapture as fresh as Jack himself. By the time the second story came along, all that wonderment had evaporated into familiarity. We knew what was lurking down the rabbit hole. Even if we're comparing like for like, the first *BioShock*'s levels are by far the cleverer of the two, each suffused with layer upon layer of subtext, connotation and sinister mystique, in a way that *BioShock 2*'s just aren't. As a game, *BioShock 2* is probably the better. The controls are tighter, the gunplay more exciting, and the morality is handled far more intelligently than in the original. But *BioShock*'s true appeal was never in how it stood up as a first-person shooter. It's the setting that makes it the emotional rollercoaster it is, and in that respect, the original game is the only one worth turning on the waterworks for. **Alex Dale**

Alex Dale is a freelance writer. Emotionally blasé about the sequel, he had to murder every Little Sister in the game to feel anything at all.

"AVP will live or die by how scary it is"
Aliens Vs Predator page 18

THE PLAYSTATION 3 MAGAZINE
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MEDAL OF HONOR
Knife kills, torture, headshots - See intense in-game footage in High Definition now
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A
B

What's on side B of your DVD?

Flip your free DVD for loads of awesome extra content

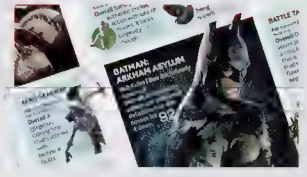
Use PS3 game saves

We have complete saves for most of the big games. Some games don't let you copy save files, but the ones that do we feature on the disc. To use them you'll need to copy them to a USB stick, then to your PS3. For a more detailed step by step guide, see the bottom of page 6.

Watch HD Trailers

To watch HD files of the hottest upcoming games, insert side B into your PS3, go to 'Video', select the disc and press △. Choose 'Display all' from the menu, highlight the trailers you want to copy, then download them to your HDD. PSM3 is the *only* mag that offers true HD vids.

and there's more...



And it doesn't end there. We've got loads of magazine features you can view in high resolution on your PS3. Follow the instructions for the HD trailers, but under 'Pictures' instead. We also have a buyer's guide, with reviews of every PS3 game to date, and wallpapers.

Final Alien Vs Predator multi-player impresses

But concerns still linger over fiddly controls

Rebellion's original *Alien vs Predator* was released, on something called a 'Jaguar'. The definitive PC version then appeared in 1999 with a hardcore multi-player focus.

To an extent that focus is being replicated in the 2010 're-imagining,' and we recently had the opportunity to dabble with the full complement of multi-player modes. Domination is a traditional Capture The Flag affair featuring aliens against marines, providing the usual taut action on either side of the species divide. Predator Hunt involves just that, and given that we couldn't see him, proved largely fruitless. Infestation was more fun, with one alien versus a squad of marines, who in turn become aliens once bitten like a glorified playground tag. Finally, Survivor pits four human-controlled marines against waves of AI aliens.

Update a classic

Tech has moved on since the 90's. Thankfully, Rebellion have exploited the advances.

"A big part of the original game was light and dark, light and shadow," says Senior Producer David Brickley. "It's very important that the alien stays out of the humans' sight – that's something the engine with next-gen power has evolved in single-player and multi-player. Your flares and torch as a marine, the ability to turn off the lights as an alien, and the way the environment changes dynamically are all great ways of making modern tech fit with what made the original game interesting."

Ultimately, it's all about mastering the strengths of the three different species, something that could prove tricky thanks to a slightly fiddly control scheme, especially with the Predator. Ultimately, *AVP* will live or die by how solid the multi-player is (early signs are promising) and how scary the campaigns are – something we're yet to fully test. Full review next issue.

"Predator Hunt proves largely fruitless"

"A 2.5D *Legend of Zelda* homage with intriguing schizophrenia"
3D Dot Heroes page 20

Holding off against waves of Aliens with friends will be a dream come true for fans of the movies.

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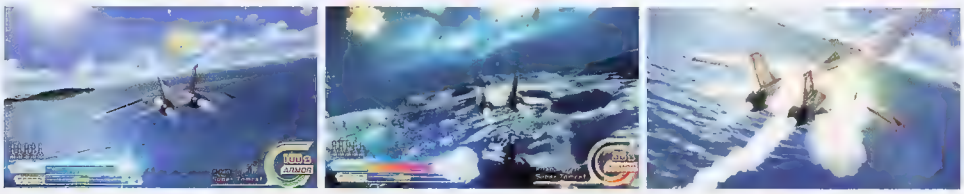
Off-radar games you don't love yet... but will

Revealed: Tomorrow's potential classics. Today

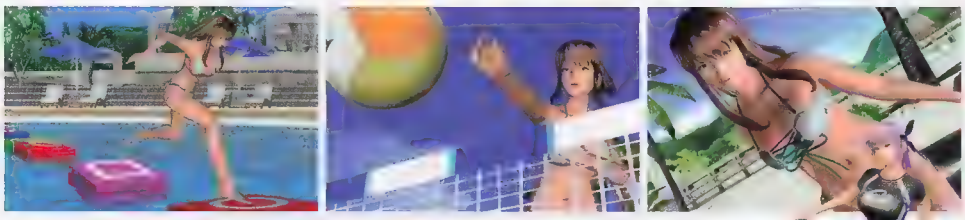


PS3 Afterburner Climax The arcade classic in High Definition

Details **Pub** Sega | **Dev** Sega | **Genre** Arcade

Lowdown One of Sega's most poorly-kept secrets, *Afterburner Climax* has been in the offing for a while. Still, we didn't expect to see the classic Mega Drive game looking so sharp in HD. This is essentially a retread in the vein of *OutRun Online Arcade*, and it will be released on PSN some time in 2010. Other info is scant – we know that the game will feature a selection of planes, including the F-14, F-15 and F-18, and that there will be several new environments. Still, if it feels anywhere near as fast to play as the original arcade game, we're in for an eye-watering treat.

ETA TBC

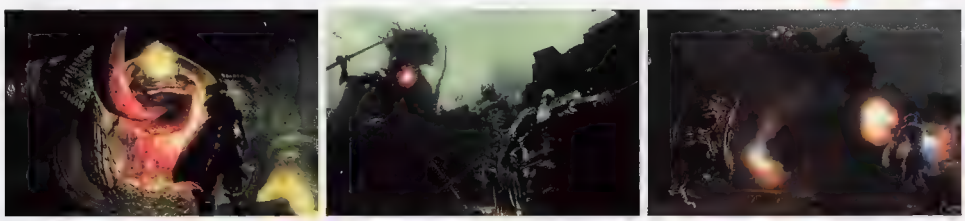


PSP Dead or Alive Paradise Life's a beach

Details **Pub** TKE | **Dev** Team Ninja | **Genre** Sim

Lowdown We imagine you raised an eyebrow when you spotted this game labelled as an off-radar classic. Well, believe it. The *Dead or Alive Volleyball* games on Xbox, despite being light on action, are relaxing time-sinks thanks to their addictive casino and pool-side mini-games and visual showcases. And that's what makes the series such a perfect fit for PSP. *Paradise* is a refreshing tonic to the stress of everyday life – even if it does make you feel like a perv.

ETA March



PS3 Demon's Souls Still a wicked import

Details **Pub** TBC | **Dev** Atlus | **Genre** RPG

Lowdown By now, you've probably heard of *Demon's Souls* – the hardcore, terrifyingly tense RPG that's taken the US and Japan by storm. We handed it an 88% back in issue 121. *Demon's Souls* innovates with its persistent online features that allow you to watch other players travel through the world in real-time and share advice by leaving notes. Sadly, the game is still without a European publisher as South Peak – who usually bring Atlus' games to these shores – has failed to secure the publishing rights. Our advice? Import.

ETA TBC

PS3 3D Dot Game Heroes Zelda goes future retro

Details **Pub** SouthPeak Games | **Dev** Atlus | **Genre** RPG

Lowdown A 2.5D *Legend of Zelda* homage with intriguing, but potentially ruinous, schizophrenia; on one hand, it's a near-verbatim *Zelda* clone (a village flanked by temples that unlock items to visit once closed areas), on the other knowing, it's quasi-ironic and 'next-gen' (full of in-jokes and deceptively handsome). We like it, but £30 is pricey for an old-school RPG, however self-aware. Dot-based character editor is superb, mind.

ETA May 2010

The Optimist

Don't worry. Be happy

Gran Turismo needs even more development time

The best things in life come to those who wait. That's what I always say, and a mantra that keeps me warm during the cold winter evenings while I anticipate my first nocturnal encounter with a lady. And never has it been more true than with *Gran Turismo 5*. When Sony announced that the fifth game in this mighty racing series was due out Spring 2010, I worried. Surely that wasn't enough time to get this game finished – after all, it's only been in development since 2005. Even with 150 people working on it for four years, with a budget that tops $60 million, that's a huge ask.

Buff and polish

So it came as a massive relief when Sony *finally* indulged Kazunori Yamauchi and his over-worked team by granting them a few extra months to really buff the shine on those 1000+ cars. Hopefully they handed over a bit more cash too – tight buggers. If they hadn't been given the time to make my vehicle of choice – the mighty Volvo 240 – as shiny as the Ferrari Superamerica I'd have taken my money elsewhere. Haha – just kidding. I've had ages to save up for it. In fact, as I started saving back in 2008, when it was originally due out, I've got enough money for one of those high-end 120hz TVs, so I can take advantage of the game being in 3D. Ooh, come to think of it, if they delay again, I'll have saved enough cash saved for a surround sound system too...

EMAIL PSM3 @

What do you think of games getting delayed?

psm3@futurenet.com

[brrrrrmmm!!]

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What happens in NEW VEGAS stays in NEW VEGAS ...until now

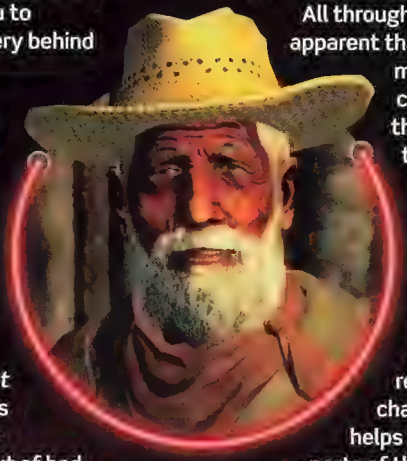
Neon, blue skies and cross-dressing mutants? That's the apocalypse, Vegas-style. PSM3 travels to Obsidian to get the world-exclusive on Bethesda's epic RPG sequel

"We want to offer people something that feels familiar but has new elements to it – more of an extension of *Fallout 3* than a complete reinvention of it" explains Josh Sawyer, New Vegas' project director. He's chatting to PSM3 over at Obsidian's studio in sunny Irvine, California following an extensive demo of an already polished, yet surprisingly familiar-looking *Fallout: New Vegas*.

And it's true – at first glance the new game's similarities to *Fallout 3* are striking. Set three years after the events of *Fallout 3*, 40 years on from *Fallout 2*, *New Vegas* kick things off with a bang instead of a birth. You were a courier, intercepted on your way to New Vegas by persons unknown, shot in the head and left in the Mojave desert to feed the

WELCOME
Fabulous
TO
VEGAS

mutated wild-life. Fortunately for you, a kindly robot named Victor picked up your broken body and rushed you to the run-down, Wild-West style town of Goodsprings, where local sawbones Doc Mitchell patches you up. And so the scene is set for you to discover the mystery behind your attempted assassination.



Born again

When you wake up, eyes blinking, you go through the same story-embedded character creation system as you did in *Fallout 3*. Doc Mitchell asks your name and age before you climb out of bed, wobbly on your feet like a dazed boxer, and head over to a machine called the Vigour Tester. It does the same job as the You Are Special book in *Fallout 3*, allowing you to set your base stats, which incidentally, have stayed the same too. Next, Mitchell sits you down and gives you a psychological profile test – it's the equivalent of the GOAT exam, only a little smarter and a lot funnier. The first round of questions is word association, and when Mitchell says "Mother" you get the option to plump for "Human shield".

All throughout the demo it's apparent that Obsidian are much more comfortable behind the keyboard than the team that made *Fallout 3* and, before that, *Oblivion*. The scripting is wittier, the characters more distinct. "We want real, memorable characters. I think it helps you remember parts of the world you'd otherwise forget," explains Larry Liberty, lead producer. He continues: "We had to modify the dialogue engine from *Fallout 3* to include the types of dialogue and options that we wanted". This is something we discover sooner rather than later. But let us set the scene for you first.

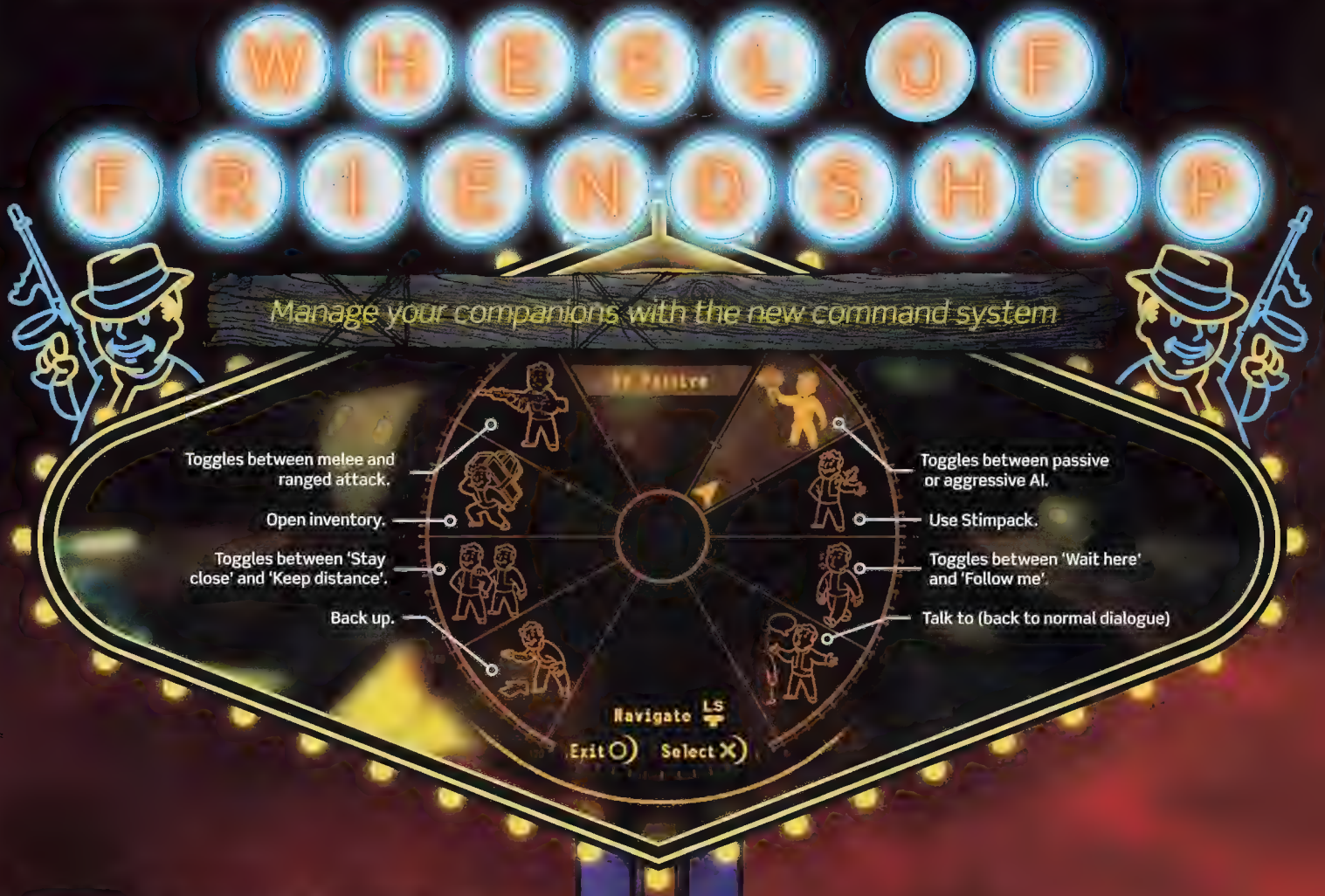
STRENGTH
STRENGTH'LL TELL YOU HOW EASILY A COWBOY TOTES HIS SADDLE AND BUCKIN' FIRE ARMS, AND HOW MUCH HELP HE IS IN A SALOON BRAWL BOTH HIS FISTS OR HIS TRUSTY BOOT KNIFE.
01
POINTS REMAINING

Test of Strength This is the Vigour Tester machine. You visit it at the start of the game to set your basic stats. It's your first taste of this new *Fallout*'s playful humour.

Perk up

Perks make a return – you'll bag one every time you level up. No word on what the new ones will be, but you can bet they'll have a Vegas theme.

Once the psych-test is over, you're free to leave Mitchell's shack and head into Goodsprings proper, armed with kit kindly given over by the Doc according to the skills you chose to invest most heavily in. So, for example, if you went heavy on medicine, you're given more Stimpacks. Clever. Outside, you're hit by one of *Fallout*'s trademark 'incredible vista' moments when you see the wasteland for the first time. Except this time you emerge shielding your eyes from the bright sunshine, barely obscured by whispy clouds in the intensely cerulean sky. You see


WHEEL OF FRIENDSHIP
Manage your companions with the new command system
Toggles between melee and ranged attack.
Open inventory.
Toggles between 'Stay close' and 'Keep distance'.
Back up.
Toggles between passive or aggressive AI.
Use Stimpack.
Toggles between 'Wait here' and 'Follow me'.
Talk to (back to normal dialogue)
Navigate LS
Exit ○ Select ✕

Dying star Unlike weapons, by reserving special attacks – we unleash 'Follow Up' – you can head them off.

relatively unspoiled houses, massive man-made structures in the distance, and... plant life. "In *Fallout* lore, this area wasn't as badly effected by the nuclear strikes. We have clear skies, we have saturated colours, we still have architecture that reflects the area" explains lead artist, Joe Sanabria. Ah, now we start to see *New Vegas* confidently pulling in a different direction to its predecessor.

"You can be free-roaming the sun-bleached wasteland five minutes after starting a game"

Dyno-mighty

From here, you're free to do as you like. There is a tutorial for newcomers, which outlines the basics of VATS and inventory management, but – because the game is so similar – you don't have to take part. You can be free-roaming the sun-bleached wasteland five minutes after starting a new game.

For the purpose of our first-look, though, we're taken into the main mission of Goodsprings. Here it seems the town has been caught in a conflict between a gang of escaped convicts called the Powder Gangers and a man called Ringo (who you find hiding out in the toilets in the local saloon).

Character building The equivalent of the GOAT from *Fallout 3*, Doc Mitchell gives you a psyche-profile test at the start.

Hardcore mode

Thought *Fallout 3* was too easy? Now there is a Hardcore mode, which forces you to deal with dehydration, carry doctor's bags for broken limbs, and changes Stimpaks to make them heal over time.

As you'd expect, you're free to approach this scenario as you choose. You can gather supporters in the town to help drive off the Powder Gangers. You can ignore it. You can side with the cons and hand over Ringo. We opt to help him out, and go about town trying to win over residents and gather supplies; and it's here we see how the dialogue has changed. Now you can use skills other than speech to influence conversations, and the dialogue option that appears now reflects the chances of it succeeding. So, in our mission we use our Sneak skill to propose a stealthy approach to the Powder Ganger assault, but because our Sneak stats are low our plan sounds woolly and filled with words like 'er' and 'kind of'. Needless to say, we fail the conversation. Time for plan B. We head outside, chat to Easy Pete – a crazy old redneck – to see if we can blag some of his dynamite and, because we have a high

Anatomy of a mission

We walk you through one of New Vegas' side-quests and introduce you to a cross-dressing Super Mutant called Tabatha...

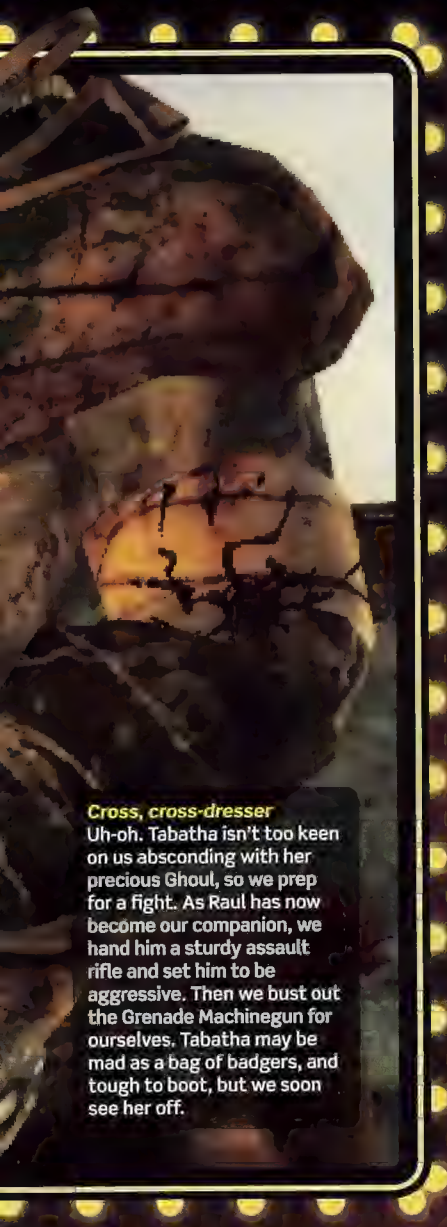
Black Mountain
The mission's set in a monitoring station called Black Mountain where mad, cross-dressing (yes) Super Mutant, Tabatha, holds a Ghoul called Raul hostage until he fixes her robot. It's guarded by Mutants and elite Nightkins, who can turn themselves invisible before uncloaking to attack.

Fight the mutants
Fight your way up the hill against Mutants and physics-based traps (we're nearly crushed by a boulder) and you reach one of the domes. Inside is a transmitter used by the Mutants to communicate. Through crafty speech we use it to turn the regular grunts on the Nightkin. Once they're dead, we rush in and rescue Raul, who is locked in a nearby shack.

explosives stat, he agrees to hand some over.

With our prep done, the fight begins. It's all very similar to *Fallout 3*, with VATS featuring heavily as we blow off limbs using dynamite and a modified 9mm. One thing that is new is the addition of special attacks for melee weapons (currently mapped to Ⓐ). Using a 9-Iron, we activate 'Fore!' on one unfortunate Powder Ganger, which sees our character swing a powerful shot straight into his nuts. Ouch. The fight concludes and the mission is over. We're awarded some positive karma for 'doing

The VATS targeting system on your Pip-Boy is back, only now it has a dusty yellow glow.



Cross, cross-dresser
Uh-oh. Tabatha isn't too keen on us absconding with her precious Ghoul, so we prep for a fight. As Raul has now become our companion, we hand him a sturdy assault rifle and set him to be aggressive. Then we bust out the Grenade Machinegun for ourselves. Tabatha may be mad as a bag of badgers, and tough to boot, but we soon see her off.

Gun upgrade One new feature is the ability to upgrade your weapons. This mini-gun has been pimped with reduced spool-up.

Dog days You find companions in *New Vegas*, just like you did in *Fallout 3*. Sadly, this hound already belongs to Sunny (pictured), who walks you through the tutorial.

the right thing' and we gain favour with the people of Goodsprings.

Divided loyalties

Obsidian are well aware that the morality system in *Fallout 3* is far from perfect. In the Capital Wasteland people still trust you with their most intimate secrets and desperate missions, even if you butcher entire towns and fire mini-nukes at their children. *New Vegas* features a reputation system that runs alongside karma to give the world a more realistic feel. Screw over a township and they won't forget it. Mess with a faction and word spreads, making other members of that group more hostile to you all over the wasteland.

Factions? Yes, and we're not just talking about the Brotherhood of Steel (they're not confirmed, but will undoubtedly make an appearance). During our demo, Obsidian revealed the two main factions fighting for control over New Vegas – the New California Republic (NCR) and Caesar's Legion, a slaver group.

"In *New Vegas* it's all about the player examining the ideologies of the various groups that are controlling the area and supporting one over the

So what's it like on PS3?

Fallout 3 was better on 360, but as for this...

Joe Sanabria, lead artist
"Developing on PS3 hasn't been an issue from my perspective. The only thing we've really had to be aware of is sticking within memory limits, but aside from that, we've been able to get some good performance out of the PS3."

Larry Liberty, lead producer
"The engine itself was used in *Oblivion* first, then moved over to *Fallout*, so I don't think it was made to be a PS3 engine from the beginning. It has been a challenge, but it works well now, especially with the new libraries that help to enhance performance."

Josh Sawyer, project lead
"To be honest, there were problems when Bethesda developed the engine and first released *Fallout 3*, but over time they've worked out a lot of those issues. We haven't found many problems with PS3. To be honest there are problems with 360, problems with PC, and problems with PS3. There isn't an inordinate number of problems with the PS3, so it has been no easier or harder to work with than the 360."

"Obsidian are far more comfortable behind the keyboard than the team that made Fallout 3"

The Western Wasteland

New Vegas' setting feels very different to the grim Capital Wasteland of Fallout 3. Here's why...

New Vegas at a glance

Six things to know about New Vegas right now

1. The Strip
Obsidian are still working on Vegas' iconic Strip of landmark hotels and couldn't say much more. They did imply that it would have gambling, variety shows and concerts...

2. Power is precious
Also within the world of *New Vegas* is the power generating Hoover Dam. It's a key part of the map, as all factions are battling for electricity to power their assets.

3. Weapon mods
You can now buy mods for your weapons to give them an edge. Once attached, they add value to the firearm – handy when you're selling it on.

4. Factions
There are two main factions in New Vegas: the disorganised military group New Californian Republic, and the slaver organisation, Caesar's Legion.

5. The soundtrack
Although artists are not confirmed, Obsidian say they're aiming for a blend of Rat Pack style tunes with more Western numbers.

6. Orbital laser FTW
During one mission you get to fire an orbital laser at enemies on the ground. Later on, you can actually get a personalised version of this weapon...

It has secrets
Radiation is still a problem, despite the lack of nukes hitting Nevada. There's an old nuclear test site north of Vegas to explore, and several mysterious radiation spills around the map. Don't ditch those Geiger counters just yet.

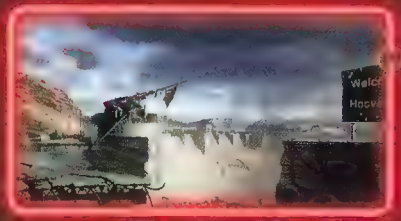
It has plant life
When *New Vegas* was being researched Josh Sawyer took a motorcycle trip to the Mojave desert to photograph the area. The result is realistic looking barrel cacti, agave plants and Joshua trees in the game.

others," explains Sawyer. "Each of the ideologies will have something good that you can relate to, but will also have massive flaws."

Brave new world

This is possibly *Fallout: New Vegas*' biggest asset. Instead of simply attaching a free-roaming environment to a trite, single-player narrative, it weaves your actions into the world, giving you greater power over the societies and landscape of New Vegas than you ever had in the Capital Wasteland. "We want to make sure that the people in New Vegas have really fleshed-out motivations, and that players can interact with them and get meaningful results from their actions," Sawyer tells us. "And when it comes to the end of the game, we want the player to feel like they shaped the world." This not only means multiple endings, branching mission structures, and replay value: it also means genuine choice when it comes to creating your own story within the world. This wasteland isn't just a dead city gasping over its last lung-fulls of life – it's an emerging society born in the post-post-apocalyptic world. Every dent you make in it, or kindness you show it will have consequences that you'll actually be able to see in the plot, the environment and the characters that live within it.

Obsidian are crafting *New Vegas* for the long-haul, rather than chopping and changing *Fallout 3*'s winning RPG formula to snag a few cheap, instant thrills. The initial similarities between



Dam and blast *New Vegas*' Hoover Dam is one of the most ambitious locations in *Fallout*'s rich history.

It has blue skies
According to *Fallout* lore the bombs didn't desolate America's West coast so, unlike the Capital Wasteland of *Fallout 3* the skies aren't dominated by dust and clouds. This means sunsets and sunrises, and oh yeah, plant life.

It has new creatures
During our demo we saw a couple of fresh beasties inhabiting the desert. The first were Geckos, radiation enlarged lizards – fairly easy to dispatch. The second were Big Horners, mutated mountain rams.

this game and the last are sure to ruffle a few virtual feathers of the vocal minorities on the Internet, but for anyone that looks deeper, the potential for this brave new wasteland will be obvious. The changes may be subtle but they're vital to the series evolution, and above all, they make the game feel significantly different yet comfortingly familiar. Sawyer describes the game as *Fallout*'s equivalent of *Vice City* – the brilliant second game that took *GTA III*'s potential to the next level and became a huge favourite among fans.

PSM3 Reckons

Brighter, funnier, smarter. That's how we'd sum up *Fallout: New Vegas*. The mechanics and structure will be very familiar to *Fallout* fans, but the colourful setting will feel like a breath of fresh air for anyone turned-off by the Capital Wasteland's unrelenting grimness. If Obsidian nail the feel of The Strip, this will be a vibrant, absorbing RPG.

18 PS3 Games for Windows LIVE XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE 2K CHINA 2K MARIN 2K AUSTRALIA 2K GAMES

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Previews

The big games, the toughest playtests

HIGHLIGHTS

Close and personal Sticking with your squad is vital – you get an XP boost for co-operating too.

"It's a sandbox that rewards bombastic play instead of realism"

Format PS3 | **Pub** EA | **Dev** DICE | **Players** 1-16 | **Genre** FPS

Battlefield Bad Company 2

For our money, the best *Battlefield* yet is a better online game than *Modern Warfare 2*

Owen Hill

We don't need to re-invent the wheel every time. We can just polish it, add new rims, wider tires. If we know what we're building and stick to it, we can make something marvellous. Life's too short to work on bad games."

Karl-Magnus Troedsson, Executive Producer on *Battlefield Bad Company 2*, understands that *Battlefield* is, for many players, the perfect formula for a multi-player game. The massive scale, complementary classes and huge array of vehicles provide the toys to create a sandbox that rewards bombastic play not realism, experimentation instead of twitch and quick respawns.

"We call them 'Battlefield Moments' – it comes from the players imagination and the tools you get to play with. You realise that when you play Rush (one of the new four vs four modes). As a medic you don't have to go through the door first. You wait

until two of your squadmates go through. The first usually gets killed, the second one maybe. Then you rush in, take the enemy by surprise, revive your buddies with the defibrillators and throw down a health kit. One of them arms the crate, the other is covering." Troedsson's enthusiasm for playing his own game is refreshingly genuine and audibly passionate: "I don't know, I completely get into the whole thing – the tightly knit squad being successful by working together."

It's still a relatively new concept for PlayStation 3 gamers. The first *BC* laid down a strong framework, but the lack of polish, along with a severe absence of headsets early in the console's lifespan meant the servers weren't as rammed as was probably justified.

Thankfully, for a game so reliant on the online component, community feedback has become an integral part of the development process. With two, very different, *Battlefield* titles on PS3 in the last two years, DICE are in a comfortable position to perfect: "We learned a lot from the first *Bad Company*. Take the health injector. In the test rooms it felt like a cool thing – having to switch to something, inject yourself, then switch back to your gun. But we got massive feedback from people who said it became too repetitive so it was changed it to the more commonly used health system in *BC2*. We learned different lessons from *1943*, more to do with how we build things. We had a very strong idea that quality comes not just from feature creep and doing everything that we can do, but instead by adding a couple of key innovative pieces and spending most of our efforts polishing them."

When there's only four men on a team, the importance of co-ordination and specific roles become even more prominent, resulting in tight teamplay and a more competitive environment. As for Sony's 256-player online rival *MAG*, Troedsson doesn't seem concerned: "We ask ourselves questions: what would make it more fun to play our game? Will the increased amount of players improve the experience? And the answer we always come back to is... no. It doesn't. We'd rather have less players and focus on the quality of the experience."

"The subtle innovation is obvious from our first game"

Scale it down

The added sheen and subtle innovation is obvious from our first game of Squad Rush – a four on four variant in which player's are tasked with attacking or defending crates in a scaled-down map. Reducing the amount of player's might seem like an odd, even contradictory, choice for a *Battlefield* game, but it actually highlights the benefits that a beta and years of experience can provide.

Gunning for glory You'll unlock variations on the loadouts as you level up each class.

Thank you very much *BC* veterans will be delighted by the revamped vehicle controls.

DICE aren't naive enough to ignore trends though – *MW2*-style perks, along with customisable loadouts and the extensive range of weaponry mean that, even within a specific class, players still have opportunity to carve out their own playing style.

Lethal pairing

But the key to *BC2*'s success is actually the *lack* of restriction. Snipers might sit comfortably in their traditional role, but can also be a vital part of an anti-vehicle pairing by launching tracer darts that give an engineer's RPG new homing abilities. Medics can now drop a crate that heals anyone in the vicinity or wrench players from their kit selection screen by stamping their chest with defibrillators, but they also enter the battle with a light machine gun – complete with huge magazine and brutal rate of fire. Even the traditionally straightforward assault class get to play a vital support role by throwing out ammo crates.

It results in a game that feels more spontaneous and varied than your average shooter. And, thanks to an intuitive HUD and intuitive radar that highlights where your skills might be required, it never feels overwhelming. Then there's the evolution of the Frostbite engine, which means every structure on the maps can be completely flattened. DICE have produced a game that could easily pull addicts away from *Modern Warfare 2*'s moreish paintball sessions.

But, unlike *1943*, *BC2* is not only about the multi-player – DICE have also made a concerted effort to improve the experience that the first *BC* offered. Troedsson elaborates: "We felt the tempo was a bit low in the first *Bad Company*. The idea for *BC2* is to use a combination of missions where you have multiple objectives, where you can scavenge different vehicles and roam around the levels. We're also going to have missions which are more scripted and linear. Some of our competitors have games that are very hectic throughout the entire campaign – sometimes we describe it as a six hour guitar solo. We're looking at it more like a cinematic experience."

BC's multi-player experience is set to be the best in the series – a bold claim considering the heritage and ambition. If the single-player campaign ends up even close to the watermark set by the online component, *BC2* could end up being one of the most complete packages on PS3.

PSM3 Reckons

The multi-player mode's even better than *1943*. If the single-player is half-decent, this will be a must-buy.

ETA MARCH 2010

Format PS3
Pub Rockstar | Dev Rockstar San Diego
Players TBC | Genre Action adventure

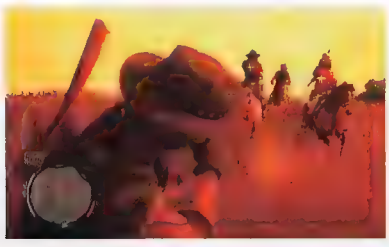
Learn, mate The cover mechanics are solid, with blind fire and lean-out shots, but shoot outs are less tense or responsive as *Uncharted 2*.

Red Dead Redemption

Hands-on seduces, mildly underwhelms

Dan Dawkins

The closer we get to Rockstar's third-person, free roaming, adventure – think *GTA: Wild West*, set at the turn of the century, as the lawless old west collides with the politics and technology of the new world – the less certain we are that its impressive, if oft largely functional, reality will match its wicked potential and intoxicating atmosphere.



Aim Free Click R3 for the slow-mo Dead Eye mode, and run your sight over foes to select hit zones.

During our relatively brief 90 minute hands-on, our fondest memories are of poetic incidentals (like framing hero John Marston's impressively textured face against the twinkling night sky with the right analogue stick, pressing ⓡ to rear up our horse and cooing as an eagle randomly swoops by), not of the functionally decent, but fairly procedural mission shoot outs (like blasting through wave after wave of goons, skipping between cover and – yes – shooting explosive barrels to reclaim a minigun).

Fistful of buttons

The core mechanics are like any solid cover-to-cover shooter, less polished than genre-pinnacle *Uncharted 2*, but more functional than *GTA IV*. L1 snaps Marston to cover, allowing free-aim or blind fire. Hold L1 to bring up a weapon wheel menu, or d-pad left/right to quick switch between weapons including pistols, bottle grenades, rifles and shotguns. Collision detection is satisfying, but enemy hit animations not quite as precise as you might wish. We occasionally found it hard to sprint between cover (hold and tap ⊗, like *GTA*, to run), as we were locked in the crouch animation (tap L3). It's far from a problem, just not overly intuitive.

Horse riding is superb. Tap d-pad up to whistle for you horse (like hailing a taxi in *GTA IV*), and tap ⊗ to giddy up – kick too much and your horse will buck, sending you flying. Handily, you can 'coast' behind other character's horses – run up behind and hold down ⊗ (your health bar changes colour to indicate you're in cruise control) –

HANDS-ON

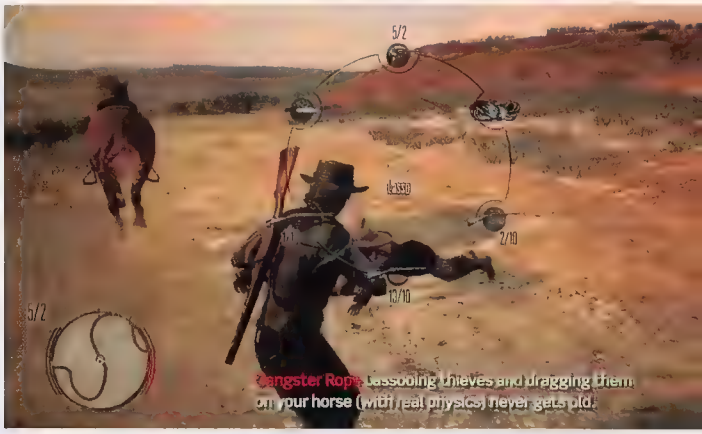
How a mission plays out

Collude with an Irish drunk to rescue a Gatling gun

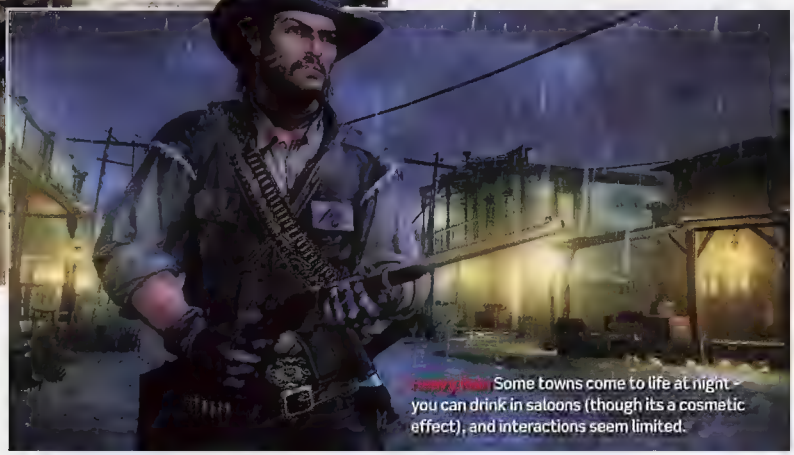
Booze Company In one mission, John forms an uneasy alliance with vagrant drunk Irish (whose life he saved earlier in the game), who knows the location of a Gatling gun needed to attack Fort Mercer.

On-Rails Shooter After a brief horse ride, John shoots his way into the mine, using cover and shooting barrels, before pushing the gun to safety on a mine cart – but it's not as intense as you'd think.

Plot Shot The map is bigger than *GTA IV*, and split across the Mexican border.



Gangster Rope Lassooing thieves and dragging them on your horse (with real physics) never gets old.



Enemy Ride Some towns come to life at night – you can drink in saloons (though its a cosmetic effect), and interactions seem limited.

allowing you to aim without worrying about riding, making it easier to focus on mid-ride chatter and mission info. You can lasso and ride any horse, plus – if you're barbarous – skin *any* animal (tap △ over the corpse), then sell its hide for cash.

The good or the bad

The 'Honour' morality system accrues in analogue fashion, with +/- scores for good/bad deeds (like capturing, or killing wanted men), but you're only digitally good or bad. Your status has no effect on the story progress, but does affect how the world reacts to you – townsfolk may offer help, pay respects, or shun and insult you accordingly. Your Fame level grows as you complete more main, and side, missions, but is only equivalent to an 'experience' or game progress rank.

Money can be gained virtuously, or viciously, like *GTA*. It's quite possible – if despicable – to walk into a bar, lasso a prostitute, drag her into the street, shoot her and steal her money.

It's this rich potential, oddly, that may prove frustrating. The much-touted random events – like being attacked by a snow leopard, or approached by a screaming stranger, invariably lead to kill/don't kill choices. Horsemen and delivery wagons will randomly rattle by as you roam the plains, but again, there's no conversation options or unique interactions – a bit like pedestrian encounters in *GTA*. Missions can result in more open outcomes. In one instance, we stormed a building to protect a farmer and his daughter – depending on your specific actions, neither, both or only one of them can die, subtly affecting the outcome of the event.

The illusion of choice, and solid, if so-so, mechanics, are potentially minor gripes given the sheer intoxicating sweep, and beauty, of the world – from go-anywhere snow topped canyons, to aching sunsets on open rivers, and bustling twilight towns. While engaging in linear, if explosive, missions doesn't deliver the instant highs of, say, *Uncharted 2*'s key scenes – in terms of variety and intense 'hot' moments, *Red Dead* feels more mono-paced – putting the pad down does lead to delayed withdrawal pangs, as you pine for the haunting soundtrack, eerie beauty and yawing scope that few, if any, games provide. If the story – reformed outlaw Marston has his family kidnapped by the government, and is forced to round up his old gang – can drive the duller missions and salve mild control quirks, plus random events prove varied and fulfilling, this could yet prove essential.

PSM3 Reckons

Compelling and atmospheric, but missions we played lacked variety – its success rests in set-piece balance and pacing.

ETA APRIL 2010

Brink

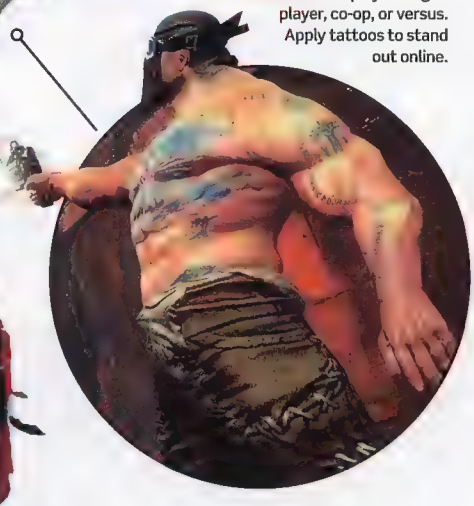
Generic heroes are a disease; here's the cure

Andy Hartup

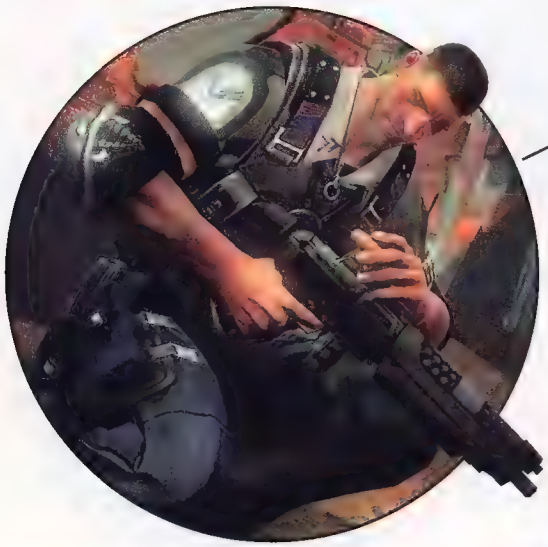
For us, *Brink* could well be the shooter of 2010. Why? It's all down to the way developer Splash Damage is approaching the game. They're not trying to better other titans like *Modern Warfare 2* or *Killzone 2* through incremental improvements, but a rethink.

Instead, Splash Damage is examining the FPS formula, ditching the bits they don't think work, and bringing in other elements to eliminate the common foibles of the genre. One example is the SMART system, which lets you vault over or jump onto any piece of scenery by holding down a single button. Another is customisation and character development, which gives you ownership of your hero (instead of forcing you into the shoes of yet another bald space-marine). Here's a taste of how deep the customisation goes...

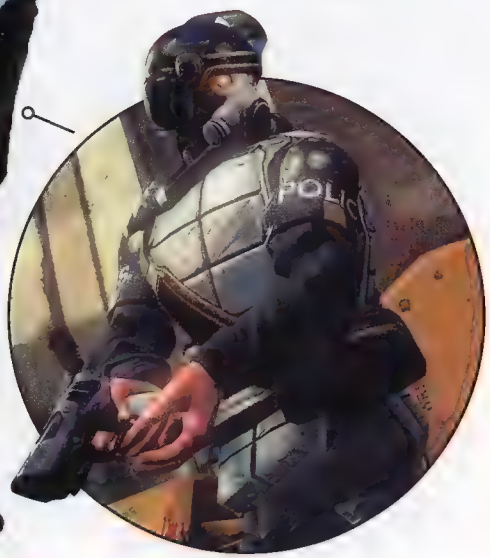
Good, bad, ugly? There are two factions: Ark Security and Resistance. Morally, neither are clear-cut 'good' or 'bad'.



Tat's all You can play in single-player, co-op, or versus. Apply tattoos to stand out online.



Body beautiful Body types and armour have influences on your stats, so bulky men with loads of kit will move and aim slower than slender types.



That's armour, eh It's worth getting stuck into the character editor since your character and your online friends appear in cut-scenes. You own Brink's story.

Clan wars Regular bits of clothing can be coloured, so you can co-ordinate your clan look with friends. It gives the whole game more of a community feel.

PSM3 Reckons

Deep customisation is just another example of how ambitious *Brink* is. A nice addition to this intense FPS.

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Format PS3
Pub Eidos | Dev Avalanche
Players 1 | Genre Action

Just Cause 2

Traversing PS3's biggest world in style...

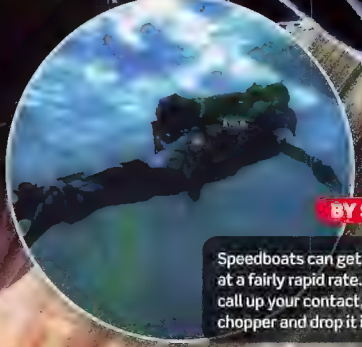
Andy Kelly

You haven't really lived until you've [illegible] metres above sea level, free falling through the clouds, having just leapt from the wing of a 747. A seemingly endless mass of deserts, snow-capped mountains, jungles and cityscapes stretches into the distance, and it looks breathtaking. But hitching a ride on a passenger jet is just one of the outlandish ways that Rico can get around this vast expanse of land.

Vehicles are themed to each region. In rural areas the roads are dominated by rickshaws and trucks, while the city teems with sports cars and superbikes.

Call for an extraction and you'll be dropped into any area you've accessed. You can free fall to your destination, activating your parachute to land, or grapple onto scenery and float for miles.

Sneak into a military airfield and you can 'borrow' experimental choppers and fighter jets. Or, if you fancy a more sedate pace, take in the sights in a light, single-engine aircraft.



Speedboats can get you between islands at a fairly rapid rate. You can steal one or call up your contact, who'll deliver one by chopper and drop it into the water.

SHARED EXPERIENCE

Exclusive to PlayStation 3

As you play *Just Cause 2* you can record the action, then upload the best bits to YouTube, directly through your PS3. No faffing with computers or capture cards. Head to bit.ly/6vKYoD to see us freefall from a chopper. Good, no?

YouTube

PSM3 Reckons

Visuals surpass *GTA IV* with a huge, thriving world, but exploring is more fun than the solid, if so-so, shooting.

ETA MARCH 2010

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Format PS3
Pub Sony | Dev Level 5
Players 1-4 | Genre Japanese RPG

White Knight Chronicles

Can Level 5's latest be the ailing JRPG's knight in shining armour?

Simon Parkin

Known for their bright, engaging worlds filled with fairytale stories that marry the mundane with the fantastical, Level 5 one of the leading Japanese RPG developers working today. *White Knight Chronicles* shares many of the characteristics that defined the company's previous work on *Dark Cloud* and *Dragon Quest VIII*, while simultaneously pushing the genre's boundaries by introducing a co-op system that allows up to four players to quest together through parts of the storyline.

Stylistically, the game takes its cues from *Final Fantasy XII*, featuring huge, brightly coloured, European-style cities, bustling with all manner of species and races. Characters are richly detailed despite their clean cut look, and move with ease and grace. While the game assumes the cartoonish look of Level 5's other work, it manages to find a neat compromise between realism and cutesy charm – one that fits with the overarching fairytale quest to save a kidnapped princess.

Play takes the form of a traditional JRPG, with exploration of cities bookended by narrative interludes. *White Knight Chronicles*' battle system is creative, taking a real-time approach that allows you to chain up to 21 moves together into combo attacks. Fill your attack gauge by smashing up regular critters, and you can even turn into a 30ft White Knight (hence the game's name) mid-combat to decimate all but the larger of your enemies.

Most interestingly, the game also presents a number of MMO-style features, chief of which is the Georama, a customisable town that you can share with other players and use as a lobby for organising multiplayer sub-quest excursions. With a sequel already announced for Japan, Sony are clearly convinced that *White Knight Chronicles* will form the start of a successful series – a confidence we reckon is well-placed with our hands-on of the game so far.

Knights in white satin The characters are lovingly crafted and move gracefully – even the big guys.

Face value The design is a little more realistic than that of Level 5's previous offerings.

Dog days Time to transform into the White Knight, or Fido here will be playing fetch with your femur.

PSM3 Reckons

Unlikely to revive the fortunes of the JRPG, but it does have some great gameplay ideas and a well-crafted plot.

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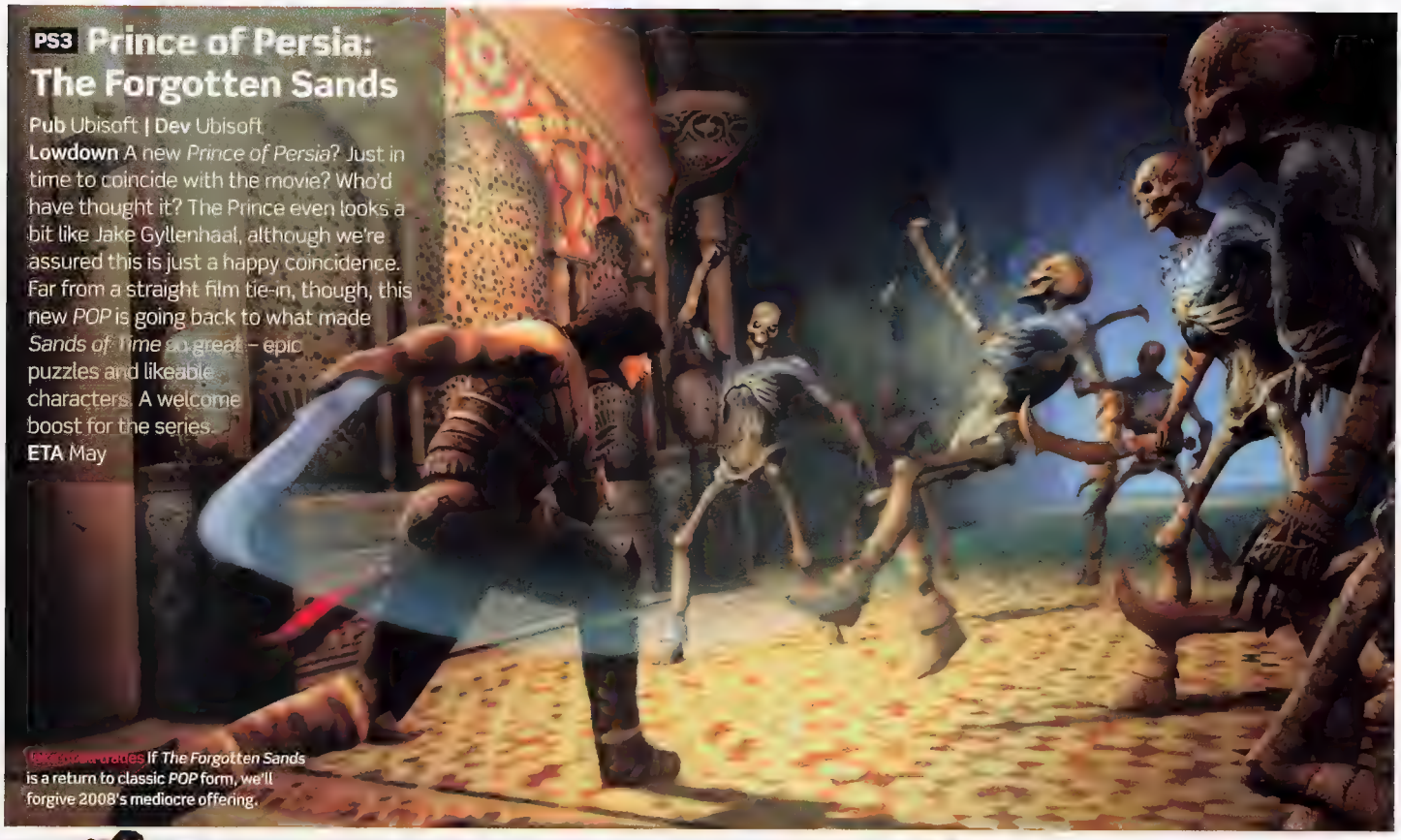
Best of the rest...

More games, more screens, more hands-on insight

PS3 Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands

Pub Ubisoft | **Dev** Ubisoft
Lowdown A new *Prince of Persia*? Just in time to coincide with the movie? Who'd have thought it? The Prince even looks a bit like Jake Gyllenhaal, although we're assured this is just a happy coincidence. Far from a straight film tie-in, though, this new *POP* is going back to what made *Sands of Time* so great – epic puzzles and likeable characters. A welcome boost for the series.
ETA May



Our verdict grades If *The Forgotten Sands* is a return to classic *POP* form, we'll forgive 2008's mediocre offering.

PS3 Yakuza 3

Details Pub Sega | **Dev** Sega
Lowdown This one has been out in Japan for almost a year, but it's a fine crime adventure so we welcome an English language version. The game hasn't been redubbed – it comes with English subtitles – which means it should retain its Eastern charm.
ETA March

PS3 Medal of Honor

Details Pub EA | **Dev** EA and DICE
Lowdown EA is sick of seeing Activision hogging all the war dollars with *Call Of Duty* and is tackling them head on with this *MOH* reboot. Set in Afghanistan, it follows the exploits of an ass-kicking, beardy Tier 1 operative. Expect awesome.
ETA October

PS3 Dead Space 2

Details Pub EA | **Dev** Visceral
Lowdown Isaac Clarke is back. Having only just recovered from the terrors of the original, Clarke now faces a Necromorph invasion of The Sprawl, a human city built on the rings of Saturn. More Zero-G puzzles and weapons are confirmed.
ETA TBC 2010

PS3 Singularity

Details Pub Activision | **Dev** Raven
Lowdown This time-bending shooter has slipped a bit. We were expecting it in February, now it's due late March at the earliest. Still if that means Raven get more polish time to avoid 'doing another *Wolfenstein*' that works for us.
ETA March

PS3 Split/Second

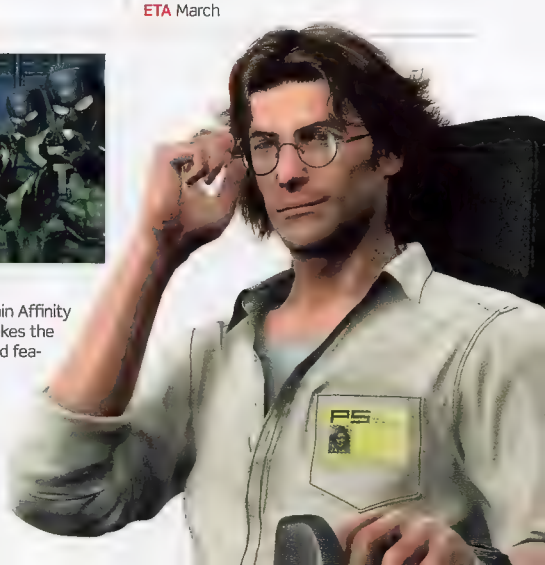
Details Pub Disney | **Dev** Black Rock
Lowdown We recently got hands-on with this, and it's still looking like a promising *Burnout* clone. If you don't know, the idea is to trigger explosive events that take out rivals or create short-cuts in the track. A nice idea that could provide a dynamic experience.
ETA May

PS3 Lost Planet 2

Details Pub Capcom | **Dev** Capcom
Lowdown Another game that has slipped a little beyond when we were expecting it, *Lost Planet 2* is now due in late spring / early summer. Pics of the new akrid bosses, which will require substantial co-op action to bring down, have sated our cravings for now.
ETA Summer

PSP MGS Peace Walker

Details Pub Konami | **Dev** Certain Affinity
Lowdown This PSP exclusive takes the *MGS* series back to the 70s, and features four-player co-op where everyone gets to play as Big Boss clones. There's a demo on the store now. Have it.
ETA May



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8 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GRAN TURISMO 5

WHY SONY'S DELAYED, BUT PRESTIGE RACER IS STILL WORTH THE HYPE...

1 OFFICIAL LICENSES

NEW CARS AND RACING LEAGUES ON BOARD

GT-creator Kazunori Yamauchi (CEO of Polyphony Digital) wants to appeal to a global audience with *Gran Turismo 5*. The announcement of IndyCar and NASCAR – both new to the series – add a more American flavour to the game.

Meanwhile European petrolheads will probably be more interested in the inclusion of a fully licensed World Rally Championship. If *GT5*'s rendition of official rallying ends up as authentic as the American flavours, expect your copy of *DIRT 2* to be gathering dust by Christmas.

The Japanese Super GT was also recently confirmed. Think highly-tuned Japanese touring cars ripping through rigorously technical circuits.

Then there's the small matter of Ferrari and Bugatti (including the formidable Veyron) – it's the first time ever that the automobile legends have been snapped up for Sony's racing stalwart.

2. IT'S BEAUTIFUL
AND THAT'S WHY WE'RE STILL WAITING FOR IT

It looks better than real life. That's what *GT*'s famous mastermind, Kazunori Yamauchi said of *GT5*'s astonishing visuals. Okay, so that's perhaps a bit much – see bit.ly/4FApAI for a head-to-head comparison video, captured using the game's 'Data Logger Visualization' tech – but his intentions are crystal clear. From every wheel nut, tyre tread and grill dimple, *GT5* exudes almost pixel-perfect photo-realism.

The entire engine has been built from scratch, utilising none of *GT4*'s code. Every car is painstakingly built from scratch, using roughly half a million polygons – up from a mere *300* in the original PSone game. It's no surprise that a staggering 60% of *GT5*'s development time to date has been spent just creating the cars. Not satisfied with the results shown in *GT5: Prologue*, Kaz has been delaying *GT5* for years polishing the graphics to a higher and higher sheen. Running at a staggering 60 frames per second, even in full 1080p HD without even a hint of a jag or blur in sight, it's an unparalleled technical achievement. *Polyphony Digital* isn't just trying to raise the bar for visuals: they want to obliterate it.

Kazunori and his team are well known for their attention to detail when it comes to tracks, too. Visiting circuits to include in the game, they photographed plants, paving slabs and even the grain of the tarmac to help nail the details.

The most staggering thing of all though? Kaz reckons these beautiful results use only 80% of the PS3's power', leaving room for improvement for *GT6*. Hang on Kaz, let's have this one first, eh?

3. IT'S GOT THE MOST REALISTIC HANDLING PHYSICS

Each one of *GT5*'s enormous roster of vehicles was test-driven by Kazunori and his team – all predictably avid race enthusiasts – to ensure spot-on handling. But *Gran Turismo 5* promises to bring the most realistic handling models yet. As anyone who attempted the recent *GT Academy* demo without the traction controls will attest to, the game is punishingly demanding. Each car's handling model is built from scratch in the same way as its appearance.

The physics, too, are a real step up over *GT4* and even *GT5: Prologue*. Cars' bodies rock through sharp corners and authentically spiral out of control at the slightest nudge from rivals. They can even completely flip over. The result is a racing experience that not only feels more realistic than ever, but much more white-knuckle than the stuffy bumper-cars approach of old.

4. IT'S GOT DAMAGE
EVERYTHING BREAKS

The damage model looked a bit limited when it was first shown off last year, but Kazunori is insistent that it was just the beginnings, merely showing the early direction. The full release, it's promised, will utilise a far deeper damage mechanic.

Every one of *GT5*'s impressive roster of vehicles will be wreckable in some way, acquiescing to fans who have

Smash TV The early, underwhelming damage model was only the start according to Kazunori.

Pixel perfect GT5's car models exhibit impeccable realism – like this Ferrari 458 Italia. Stunning.

cried out for vehicle deformation for years. Okay, so only 170 'premium' vehicles will be fully damage-modelled, but every car can be visually broken, with huge potential consequences for the internal mechanics. End up braking too late and smash into a wall? Think brake failures, loss of speed, slower gear changes – a whole host of race-wrecking results. A generation of cheeky barrier-bouncing, shunt-happy players will need to adapt, fixing the bumper-car tactics that have plagued *GT*. The damage on the premium models is where the real visual treats lie. Kazunori promises not just pre-rendered visual changes – think *Burnout Paradise* – but a fully implemented model which reacts to the speed, force and angle of a crash and crumples and twists cars accordingly. Not only this, but the interiors too will be affected by every bump, scrape and knock. Caved-in roofs and smashed-up doors add an extra tension to getting into scuffles, lending the cockpit view a visceral edge.

GT5'S BIG NUMBERS

POLYPHONY DIGITAL'S GAME IN PURE DIGITS...

950 cars currently in *Gran Turismo 5*

2 player split screen running at 60FPS

∞ The potential limit for *GT5*'s soundtrack due to custom playlists

1,000+ cars that might feature by release day

16 maximum players in each online race

3 peripherals usable with GT5 simultaneously (Steering Wheel, PSEye, 3D glasses).

500,000 Number of polygons in each car

5 years spent developing *GT5*, thats..

1,826 days in the making

300 Total polygons in each car in the original *Gran Turismo*.

60% of the time spent creating the car models

3 number of discs *GT5* will be released on

70 Possible course variations

environments to house them **20**

$60m reportedly spent developing *GT5* so far

1920x1080 pixels used to make a full HD screen

4 officially licensed competitions revealed so far

MERCEDES SLS AMG GULL-WING

A spiritual successor to the legendary 300SL Gull-wing Mercedes, this beast of a supercar is confirmed to be *GT5*'s cover star. With a top speed of 197mph, 563BHP and a 6.2 Litre V8 engine, it's powerful enough, if not the craziest thing on four wheels. Just take a look at the mad, but brilliant, design down there.

GT5 boasts 70 circuit variations spread over 20 environments. The game won't just comprise the usual mix of street circuits and dirt tracks on a bland selection screen either. It promises to be a tour de force of some of motor racing's most famous circuits in some of the most naturally striking locales on Earth. Whilst it's by no means confirmed, we'd put money on 20 environments equalling 20 different countries, each complete with real tracks and *GT* originals. The old favourites, such as The Nürburgring, make a welcome return, but we're most excited about the new additions. We've already seen the Daytona Speedway unveiled from America's favourite left-turn motorsport, NASCAR, but it's pretty much guaranteed that Polyphony have much more up their sleeves. Oh, and *GT5* also features a humble little circuit called 'Dunsford Park', also known as the Top Gear test track, which even shows replays from the same angles used on the hit BBC show. A track editor has also been heavily hinted at too. As if this wasn't enough, dynamic environment changes will play a part in races. Though the *GT* devs have been characteristically slippery about the details, dynamic weather and lighting changes are confirmed for longer races. This means 24 Hour events (no word on whether they will *actually* be 24 hours in-game), will challenge your adaptability as well as your endurance.

Touring cars The tracks are varied and exhaustive; the locations globe-spanning.

7. IT'S GOT NEARLY 1,000 CARS

AND YOU CAN TINKER WITH THEM ALL

The heart of *Gran Turismo 5* lies in its glorious representation of automotive history, from the very beginnings of the motorcar – such as the 1886 Benz Patent MotorWagen – to brand new 2011 supercars like the Mercedes SLS AMG. They'll all be accurately modelled and drivable come release.

It's the world's largest motor museum, interactive toybox, hyper-accurate driving sim and realistic racer, all in one. *GT5* will also be the first full iteration to feature some truly historic marques, including Ferrari and Bugatti – conspicuous by their absence in *GT4*. If you think the Lamborghini Gallardo could use a few tweaks (read: if you're mad) you'll even be able to alter almost every aspect of the car inside and out, as teased by Kazunori. That means both paint-jobs and mechanical tweaks. We can't wait to see the kind of fantastic/hideous creations that the darkest corners of the PSN community will manage to conjure up.

Check the top of the page to see a few of the factory-standard models we're looking forward to taking for a spin when *GT5* hits later this year.

FERRARI 458 ITALIA

Ferrari's latest is one hell of a looker, blurring the dangerous line between platonic enthusiasm and petrol-fueled arousal. Crafted by the prancing horsemen's F1 know-how, the 202Mph top speed and 560BHP say it's a demon on the track, too.

TOYOTA FT-86G CONCEPT

Toyota's stunning new concept has a neat party trick. Its tech, developed with Polyphony, records lap times on real-life racetracks via GPS. Then shove the car's memory card in your PS3 to watch a ghost of your lap on the same track in *GT5*. Nifty, though a feature that'll get lost on the vast majority of players.

WHEN WILL IT COME OUT IN THE UK?

Well, Sony's official line is a summer global release. Up until January, the game was due in March 2010 for Japan, with the US and Europe following shortly afterwards. Post-delay, the hot rumour is a September/October release in the UK. Just in time for more affordable pre-Xmas 3D TVs? We'll see.

8. IT'S INNOVATIVE

THE FIRST GAME WORTH PLAYING IN 3D

GT has been criticised in the past for sticking too closely to one formula – more cars, shinier graphics. *GT5* bucks the trend, packing in a wealth of fresh features – most notably 3D. *GT5* was the highlight of Sony's recent Consumer Electronics Show (CES) PS3 3D demo, with silky smooth frame rates, solid cars (like tiny 3D toy models) and crisp scenery. You'll need Sony's forthcoming RealD-tech glasses (our guess £50-£100) and a 3D ready TV (Samsung offer the UK's only current 3D TV for about £800, but most manufacturers will have 3D sets from summer 2010). Sony are backing 3D hard, and prices will tumble to mass-market levels over the next year or so.

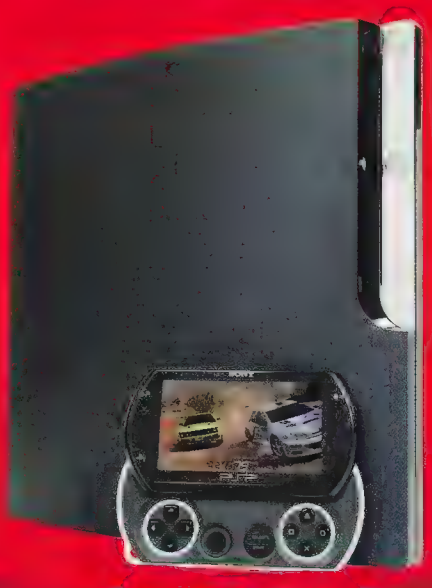
PSEYE

Head tracking using the under-rated PSEye will feature too. Integrated with the cockpit cam, looking left or right will move the camera in-game. Stealing a glance at a rival driver as you slip past them on the inside, or checking the apex of a hairpin in a rally drift would be so simple yet feel so rewarding. The sense of realism – especially when combined with 3D tech – will be unrivalled.

3D TV

PSP connectivity, while more mundane, is another interesting feature. Get converting those *GT: PSP* credits into portable supercars now, because when *5* hits, you'll be able to transfer your favourite rides from pocket PlayStation to its bigger brother. Whilst this might ruin the rustbucket-to-dream machine journey that is the career mode, we can't wait to convert all those train-ride struggles into online bragging rights. Our first transfer? The Bugatti Veyron of course.

You can also upload replays direct to YouTube, making *GT5* a true technical showcase – if you've got the kit to match. PSM3



PSP - PS3 CONNECTIVITY

Your words, your pictures, your videos...

Your Space

LETTER

Star letter wins you a prize!

Write the star letter and win this awesome *Far Cry 2* limited edition box set. It comes with the game, a t-shirt and an art book.

PSM3 wants YOU!

- **Post** PSM3, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW. Star letter wins the writer a prize
- **Email** mail us at psm3@futurenet.com
- **PlayStation Network** Add us: PSM3uk
- **Facebook** Search for 'PSM3' in the Groups application
- **MySpace** Visit www.myspace.com/psm3
- **PSM3mag.com** Visit the forum at psm3mag.com
- **Online** Play the team at online games and win big
- **Twitter** Follow us at twitter.com/psm3_magazine

Letters To PSM3

Your letters and emails, sifted and printed

Downloadable con-tent True exclusives are a rare thing.

"I have a feeling that Rockstar can't ignore PS3's success"

LETTER

I was wondering if you could clarify one thing for me regarding the exclusivity of downloadable content on PS3. Didn't Todd Howard, the executive producer of Bethesda say that the *Fallout 3* DLC was only going to come out on Xbox and PC at 2008's E3? If so, will this not also apply to the rest of 360's exclusive DLC?

I have a feeling that Rockstar can't ignore PS3's success. I mean, 25 million consumers and 560 million global downloads just can't be ignored if they're planning on making a much cash as possible. The *GTA IV* DLC does look good but not totally essential.

Steven Beall, email

PS3 is blessed with some superb exclusives, but they're almost all 'first-party' i.e. from developers affiliated to Sony: *Uncharted*, *Killzone*, *Ratchet* and *Heavy Rain* to name just a few. Truth is, very few 'third party' developers can afford to be truly platform exclusive. Games are expensive to make, and it'd be suicide to offer a true Xbox exclusive, ignoring the 27 million odd PS3 owners worldwide – well, without *major* subsidies from Microsoft. Timed exclusives – anywhere from one to six months – are the new industry standard. Even the PixeUunk team, who were once solely creating games for Sony's console are branching out in order to broaden their user base and make more cash.

GTA IV's DLC is near certain for PS3, with Rockstar teasing on their website "We understand the frustration of PS3 owners who haven't been able to play our most recent releases... we promise to be very good to you in 2010." *GTA* DLC aside, Rockstar North's *Agent* is PS3-exclusive, while *LA Noire* is also tipped for Sony's console.

"You What?"

Thanks for writing. No. Really

Guys who do reviews u great plz do them next year plz.
Logan Blair, email

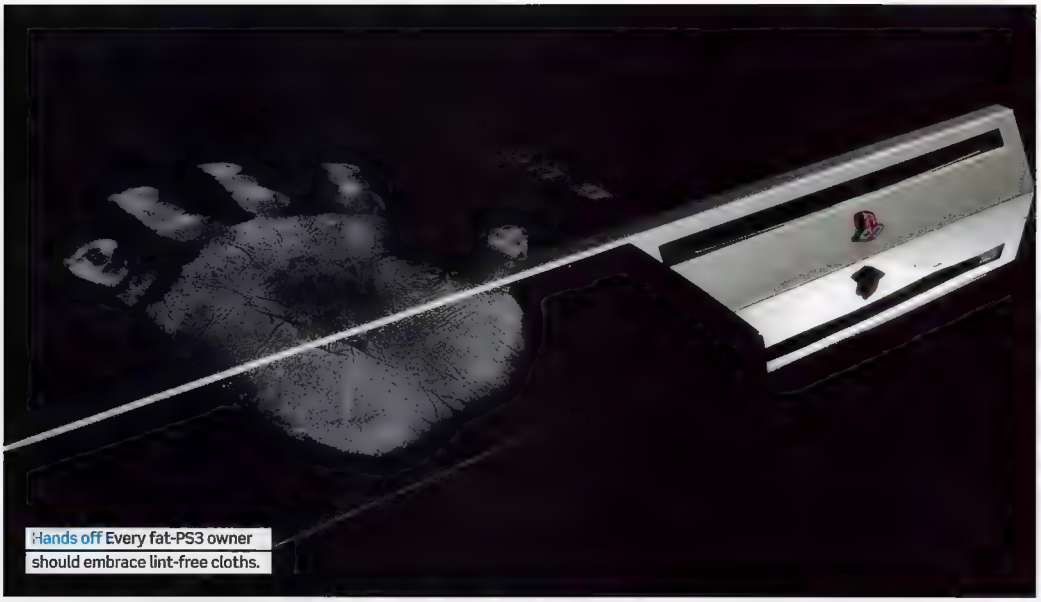
Thanks. We will. Podcast?
Fred Jones, Facebook

Erm... yes. Once a month friend. I wish my PS3 was white. It wouldn't look as evil.
Hannah, email

If you have a big bag of cash, you can import a white console or pads. Try Renchi.com or Play-asia.com
Bayonneta has reset my mouth to the open position as default!

Travis, email
Probably down to the fluid combo system and exquisite pacing.

"This is a plea for help from a fellow gamer"
Andy Dawson, email page 53



Hands off Every fat-PS3 owner should embrace lint-free cloths.

Scratch and sniffle

I am a man at the end of my tether. This is a plea for help from a fellow gamer and lover of all things expensive and shiny.

One week ago my 60Gb PS3 developed a disc drive fault and I sent it to Sony for repair at a cost of £99.00. Today I received my PS3 back and in full working order and while I was pleased with the speed and efficiency of the service, I was less than impressed with the physical condition in which my console was returned. I do not take spending £425 lightly, and pride myself in having kept my console in absolute mint condition. Nothing more than a stray finger print tarnished it's surface.

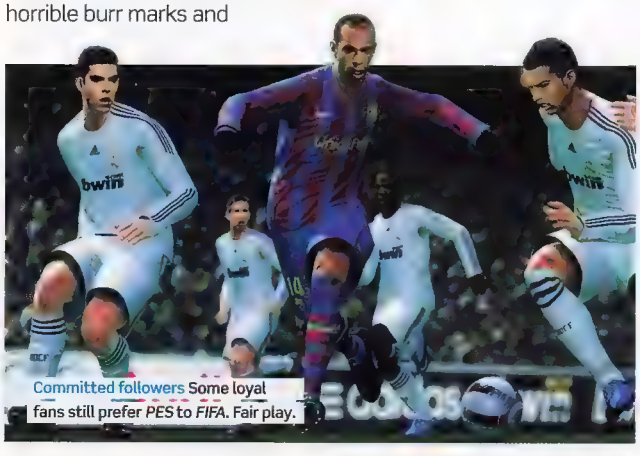
You can imagine my disappointment upon removing the packaging to find my console looking like it had spent the best part of a week lying face down in grit or sandpaper. Its once perfect mirror finish has been replaced by horrible burr marks and scratches over both top and bottom panels. This is completely unacceptable and is the exact kind of problem I thought I would avoid by sticking with an official Sony service instead of visiting the shady man on the high street and paying a fraction of the price.

I am absolutely gutted and to be honest, quite pissed off that someone would treat my pride and joy this way as I am sure you will all agree. Its like sending your car to the garage to replace the exhaust and it coming back with scratched paint work – sure you can drive it but it looks like shit.

If you have any advice on what course of action to take I would be very grateful. Is it possible to replace the facia/casing or should I try returning it to Sony?

Andy Dawson, Email

We'd recommend that you get back in contact with Sony. Any attempts to replace the casing yourself will invalidate your warranty – a bad thing for the future. We do sympathise though – many an hour has been wasted dusting/polishing/removing lipstick from our PS3s.



Committed followers Some loyal fans still prefer *PES* to *FIFA*. Fair play.

PSNMail

Mail us at psm3uk

Contender ready

Will people with *Street Fighter IV* be able to play with people who have *Super Street Fighter IV*?

Luke Slade

Unfortunately not – *Super Street Fighter IV* is going to be more than just an expansion pack. The new Ultra combos and revamped online modes mean that you'll need to upgrade to compete.

To those who wait...

Due to my inability to get a job and earn any semblance of money I couldn't afford any of the number of games I would usually have bought without hesitation in the last month. *Uncharted 2*, *Tekken 6*, *Modern Warfare 2* and *PES10* have all been sitting on shelves mocking me with their

I just took the quiz "Which Taylor Swift song are you?" and my result was Picture to Burn. What's yours?

AoifeeO, Twitter

We started doing the quiz but we gave up when it started accessing our intimate info. I used to like snow because I got to play in it. Now I'm just glad I have an excuse to stay in and game.

Waterboi777, email

We went through that epiphany a few years ago. It's a little bit sad, but ultimately warmer. I'm addicted to online pwnage.

Francis Jons, email

Owen is similarly addicted. Well, to the online bit.

The best of PSM3MAG.COM

This month's best forum thread

Topic: Do we expect too much from games these days?

There's so much ranting and people moaning about everything in games today. Do we expect too much from this generation?

BaconLad

Consumers are always demanding the best, due to the fact we've been spoilt in the 21st Century with such good technology and entertainment. We're always comparing products to certain hits, and if they're not as good as previous successors we'll milk them to they're dry with negatives.

Chezmeister

It's much easier to pick the negatives of a game than the positives. Whether that's because we're British or what. Saying that, I do find it hard to be as negative as some as you. *MW2* was sh*t though.

Crackajack

Quote of the month

As uttered on the PSM3 forums

"Shouting at a 32" 1080p TV is still shouting at a TV"

by spaceman_DOUG

Perhaps it's for the best? It should hopefully always improve the industry. I think it's in human nature to never be truly satisfied. Although, I think it would be cool if we were stuck in the age of Mario and Sonic for 15 years then boom! *MW2* come out. The improvements get are never going to be that big.

Iwill

Am I expecting too much when I want a game that lives up to the hype it boasts about, a game that lasts long enough, a game that gives you enough reason to go back to? I guess I am.

TheCrimsonFenix

Lots of people will just not buy a game because of a single niggly fault. If that's the case I'm going to complain, because I know the stuff can be easily patched.

Spaceman_DOUG

PS3 has the power to generate big, crazy, original games, we just haven't seen any yet.

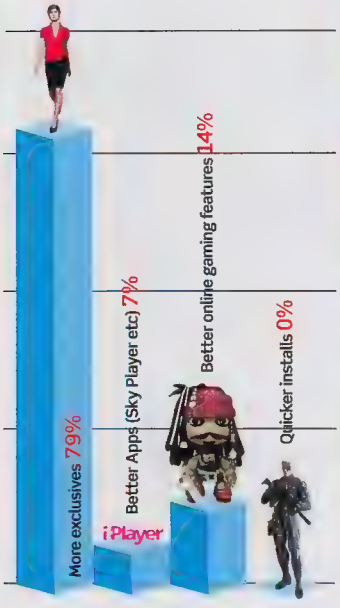
frankthepieking

Visit psm3mag.com and have your say

Poll Position

We ask. You answer

This month What's at the top of your PS3 wishlist?



Next Month When do you buy special editions? Whenever you can, when they come with merch, when they include DLC, or never?

To vote check out the 'Poll Position' thread in the 'PSM3 Magazine' forum on www.psm3mag.com

Straight laced *FFXIII* is sure to split the community down the middle.

covers. So I was forced to delve back into my current collection for some Trophy hunting and due to the update *GTA4* was first candidate. And to my surprise I was hooked all over again, 46 hours later I'd slammed through it again and exterminated every single of those ridiculous pigeons for my beautiful 100% Gold Trophy. But as my Internet is also struggling, probably because I haven't paid for it, I was unable to mop up online trophies so I'm stuck with a measly 78% on the Trophy list.

My point is twofold: games should not deny you a Platinum Trophy because you have no money (same with downloadable content – don't get me started on *Prince of Persia*). Having no money and living behind the times a little has its benefits. Regardless, I'm probably in denial, I can smell that shiny *PES* box from here dammit.

Great Mag as always.
Simon Rubery, Birmingham.

There's plenty of desirable titles around following 2009's offerings – enough to bankrupt all but the most wealthy. Trophies are a great – if often punishing – way to reap more value from titles that are already on your shelves. They encourage players to experiment with different play styles, and step outside of their comfort zones to try things that might not happen through normal play.

While we understand your frustration at being restricted by your internet connection, online play is becoming an integral part of most games – multi-player Trophies are a cert for the future. That said, Infinity Ward don't seem too concerned about them, not offering a single one for competitive versus play in *Modern Warfare 2*.

As for developers restricting Platinums to a select few who are willing to pay for extra DLC – it's an undeniably dirty tactic and an ugly precedent to set. Here's hoping Sony lay down some well-defined rules to prevent it happening in future releases.

PSNMail

Mail us at psm3uk

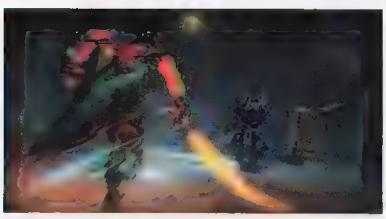
Pixeljunkie
I love all the Pixeljunk games but my mate says that the developers have stopped making games for PS3. Is this true?
Grassyknowa11
The PixelJunk PS3 exclusivity has ended, but that doesn't mean that we'll get less games – just that we'll have to share them with Xbox owners. Pfft.

In your sights
What chance has *M.A.G.* got against *MW2*? Lol.
Riflefriendlyguy588
Turn to page 84 to find out. Hint: not that much.

Classic controller

I'm 22 and have been gaming since I was about 8. I grew up with the Sega Mega Drive, PlayStation, PlayStation 2 and now the mighty PlayStation 3. Between my first gaming moments on *Sonic The Hedgehog* to my current gaming antics on titles like *PES 2010* and *Ratchet & Clank ACIT* nothing has really changed in regards to the way we play games.

I still hold a joypad in my hand and I still usually have to put some kind of media device into my console. My point is that in the 13 or so years I have been gaming the only thing constantly changing is the graphics to each new title released. So why do Sony feel the need to pursue the dreaded motion



Price of Persia **The game was decent, but the DLC tactics were a bit dirty, and upset some fans.**

"You What?"

Thanks for writing. No. Really

Cloud computing or 3D will never take off.
James Halsey, email

We can imagine Cloud gaming taking hold in the future. 3D is likely to take a lot longer, especially considering it requires *another* TV upgrade.
I was wondering if there will be a *Final Fantasy XIII* demo.
Fenrio, Twitter

A demo hasn't been confirmed for UK shores sorry. We'll keep you updated.
I want *Demon's Souls*. When's it hitting the UK?
Alex Jones, email

It's a superb game, but there's still no confirmed UK release date, sadly.

control in games? I'm aware that the Wii managed to capture a casual gaming market that attracted millions I very much doubt Sony's motion control will do the same and I'm sure I speak for a lot of other gamers when I say that I just want to play AAA titles in the comfort of my home on my sofa after a hard days work.

I don't want to have to swing my arms around getting a cursor to respond on my TV screen and i don't want to see hundreds of tacky casual kids games flooding the market at £40 a time. The beauty of the consoles barely changing throughout the years is that it constantly gives developers a challenge to reinvent a genre or game without the need for add-ons much like Infinity Ward have done with *Modern Warfare*/FPS games.

The old saying comes to mind: "if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Kyle Travis, Email

We've welcomed subtle evolutions like analogue controls, rumble pads, online play and DLC, but Sony's motion controller – tipped to called PlayStation Arc – leaves us intrepid, at best. Technically, they're impressive, but given Wii's glut of dreadful casual games, it's hard to be excited. Unless a killer app arrives early, it'll be like the SixAxis 'revolution' all over again.

Kreigler Söze

I was reading Issue 123 and noticed your *Modern Warfare 2* plotline. My favourite part was about mystery man, Kriegler. His name appears throughout both *MW* games, such as in the cargo ship in "Crew Expendable" and the highrise multi-player map in *MW2*.

I was playing *MW* and during the opening credits I saw the name... Richard Kriegler! Turns out he was an art designer for Activision so the Easter egg may be for his own personal fun.

Liam Keyes, email

We know Kriegler's an in-joke, but it could be written into the script if the plot needed a Blackwater-style military business pulling Shepherd's strings...

Break it down

Great mag you have and looking forward to receiving it via my new subscription. I got up the other morning and switched on my beloved PS3 for a game of *Call Of Duty 4* and it worked fine. I went away for some lunch and went back to play *Call Of Duty 4* again, but when I switched on my PS3 it wouldn't read *COD4* or any of my other games. I tried CDs and DVDs and they occasionally read. I would like to know what the problem is and was wondering if you guys could help?

Darren, Glasgow

Sorry Darren, we can recommend is a call to Sony Customer services: 08705 99 88 77. Just cross your fingers that the PS3 comes back safe (see Andy's email). Thanks for subscribing by the way (bit.ly/76dZ1f). You are wise.

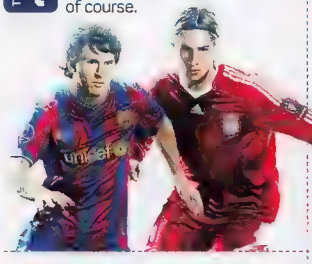
PSM3's Top Four Readers

Be heard. Join PSM3's online army today

EMAIL

Who are you? Takis Mylonas
Where are you from? Patras, Greece
What bands are you listening to at the moment? Linkin Park, Kings of Leon and others too.
What's your favourite game of all time? It's a toss-up between *MGS3: Snake Eater*, *Resident Evil 2* and *PES*.
What are your favourite films? The Godfather, Scarface, The Bourne Ultimatum.
How long have you been reading PSM3? Since issue 47 of PSM2.

THE BIG Q **What's the last game you got addicted to?** *PES 2010* of course.



EMAIL

Who are you? Tarela Tawari
Where are you from? Yenagoa, Nigeria
What bands are you listening to at the moment? Ne-Yo. Not a band, an R&B artist.
What's your favourite game of all time? *Resident Evil 4*
What are your favourite films? The *Resident Evil* Trilogy
How long have you been reading PSM3? PSM3? Since the days of PSM2, (say 2005).

THE BIG Q **What's the last game you got addicted to?** *PES 2009*, Be a Legend Mode.

FACEBOOK

Who are you? Gwilym Lewis
Where are you from? Treorchy, Rhondda
What bands are you listening to at the moment? The Bamboos, lots of Fix Monday, Taylor Swift and Meatloaf.
What's your favourite game of all time? *Chuckie Egg* on the BBC Micro – it was one of my first gaming experiences so I remember it fondly.
What are your favourite films? Daft Punk Interstellar 555 and 2001: A Space Odyssey.
How long have you been reading PSM3? About nine months I think.

THE BIG Q **What's the last game you got addicted to?** *Final Fantasy X* – blitzball was awesome.

MYSPACE

Who are you? Rory Wilson
Where are you from? Originally Glasgow, just now, London
What bands are you listening to at the moment? R.F. Children, Roxy Music, Polysics, The Real Tuesday Weld. Soundtracks: Tetsuo, Scarface, *House of the Dead: Overkill*.
What's your favourite game of all time? *Scarface*, *House of the Dead*, *MGS 1-3*, *Silent Hill 2*, *Katamari*, *Everybody's Golf*.
What are you favourite films? A Bitter Sweet Life, The Vengeance Trilogy, Blades of Glory, Scarface
How long have you been reading PSM3? *Since issue 1*

THE BIG Q **What's the last game you got addicted to?** *Scarface* and *Just Cause* – gotta love base jumping across the map.

Want to make our top readers? Send us a MySpace friend request, join the Facebook group or comment on the blog at psm3mag.com

Tat object of the month

The 'best' of the game-related bilge delivered to the PSM3 office

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Impractical The card was stuck to the lid. Cool eh?

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The Death of the J-RPG?

Final Fantasy XIII has split fan opinion as Japanese RPGs suffer a crisis of invention. We explain the death, and possible redemption, of the once-legendary role-playing game...

Over *ten million* people own a copy of *FFVII*. Released in 1997, Square's iconic RPG is still regarded with reverence by RPG die hards, and casual players alike. *FFVII* sold 2.3 million copies in its first three days on sale in Japan alone. To put this in perspective, *Metal Gear Solid 4* sold 77,000 copies in its first week, growing to 5 million copies worldwide. Thirteen years on from FFVII's glorious debut, Japanese RPGs are losing their lustre among

The Death of the J-RPG?

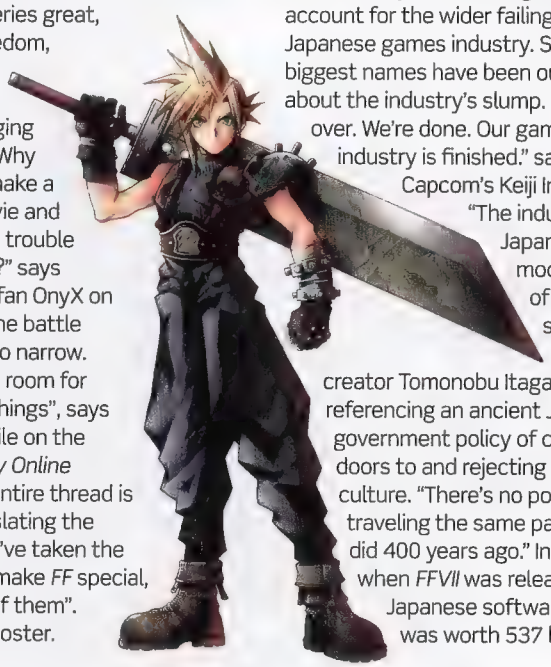
committed, and casual, fans alike – and, poetically, it's *Final Fantasy XIII* that's the most iconic, if polarising, symbol of the genre's perceived stagnation. *FFXIII*'s critical reception has been unusually mixed, veering from Japanese games bible Famitsu's near-perfect 39/40 to Hong Kong Magazine's 4/10 review, in which they described it as an 'insult' and 'the biggest swindle in gaming history' because of its linearity. "It's little more than an amusement park ride." They said, scoring the gameplay 1 out of 10.

"The hype machine is to blame," says RPGFan.com reviews editor Patrick Gann of the game's mixed reception. "When I first saw the trailer for *XIII*, I nearly lost control of my bladder. But that was at E3 2006. If the eye candy is the best thing about this game, then Square played their trump card about four years too soon."

Battle stations Fans and critics have turned on *FFXIII*. Does it deserve it?

Roleplay reversal

Even die-hard fans are turning, condemning a loss of the values that made the series great, namely; freedom, interesting characters and challenging storylines. "Why don't they make a 20 hour movie and save me the trouble of playing it?" says disgruntled fan OnyX on YouTube. "The battle system is too narrow. There's little room for trying new things", says another. While on the *Final Fantasy Online* forums, an entire thread is devoted to slating the game. "They've taken the things that make *FF* special, and got rid of them". voices one poster.



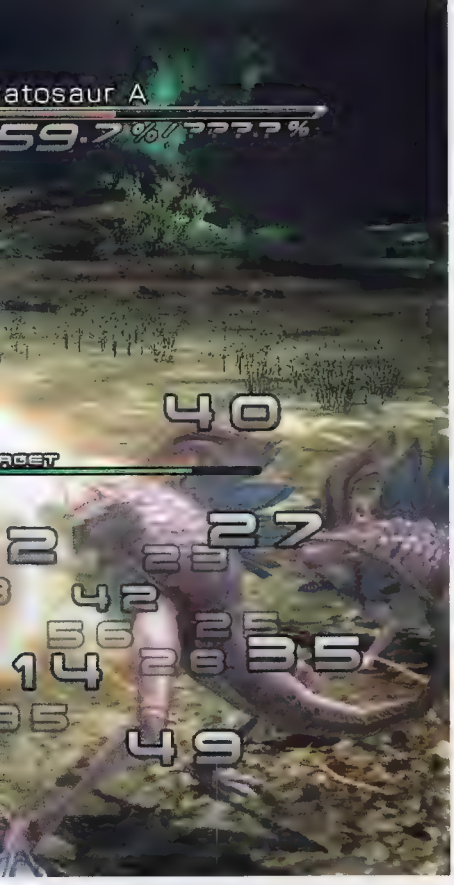
Once a symbol of global success, *Final Fantasy* is now being held to account for the wider failings of the Japanese games industry. Some of its biggest names have been outspoken about the industry's slump. "Japan is over. We're done. Our games industry is finished." says Capcom's Keiji Inafune. "The industry in Japan is a modern form of *sakoku*." says *Ninja Gaiden* creator Tomonobu Itagaki, referencing an ancient Japanese government policy of closing its doors to and rejecting foreign culture. "There's no point in traveling the same path Japan did 400 years ago." In 1997, when *FFVII* was released, the Japanese software market was worth 537 billion yen.

But in 2009, it slumped to 326 billion. A significant drop. The decline might be linked to Japan's reluctance to adapt, suggest industry voices, with publishers selling, and re-selling, barely evolved sequels to previous hit games, only to a dwindling audience. *Final Fantasy* is on its fourteenth chapter,

A J-RPG historical score chart

How have scores for J-RPGs changed over the last 19 years?

The Death of the J-RPG?



For many Western RPG fans, the thought of another cookie-cutter adventure has little appeal. "Developers have mired the modern J-RPG in unoriginality", claims Brittany Vincent, contributor to RPGFan.com, "It's harder to empathise with characters we've met a hundred times before – the shrieking, hyperactive schoolgirl (like *Star Ocean*'s Welch), and the quirky oddball (archetyped by robot mind reader Cait Sith in *FFVII*)."

Stuck in the past

"It's hard to feign concern for imitations of worlds we liberated years earlier, " Vincent continues, "With every new orphaned amnesiac protagonist, these universes blur into one". *Tales of Symphonia*, *The Last Remnant*, *Enchanted Arms*, *Star Ocean*, *Tales of Vesperia*, *Lost Odyssey*, *Phantasy Star* – all conform to Vincent's theory, decent games, but ones that gamers

Big boss Square CEO Yoichi Wada says the *FF* team could make a great new IP – if the fans *let* them.

"These days, EXP grinding – fighting hundreds of identical random battles to increase stats – make the games feel like an archaic remnant of the past", adds Brittany Vincent, "We're looking to recapture the magic of the 'old days'; the giddy feeling of a world of unknown possibility opening up before you. Now many gamers see a new J-RPG, and think of the toil lying in wait; the effort and time sacrifice required to get the most from it". While its visuals have huge universal appeal, and the plot intrigues, *FFXIII* takes 20 or 30 hours before reaching its potential. For *FFVII* fans, now 13 years older, and

> It's hard to feign concern for imitations of worlds we liberated years earlier

while *Dragon Quest* is welcoming a tenth instalment. It isn't so much the dependence on sequels, but their inability to surprise that strikes many pundits. "The developers just don't seem interested in taking risks any more", claims PSM3's J-RPG expert Kim Richards. "Recent games like *Star Ocean: The Last Hope* and *The Last Rebellion* are all using the battle systems, the themes and the dialogue boxes from ten years ago."

outside of their fanbases will know little about, unlike the universally popular *Final Fantasy* series. A key problem is a fear of change, pinpoints Square Enix's CEO Yoichi Wada: "Internally and externally, I feel there's an expectation for us to offer something new. I really think that the *Final Fantasy* team could create something completely different, but at the moment they're strictly catering to a particular audience."

Gear up *Xenogears* on PSone was a popular alternative to the *Final Fantasy* series.

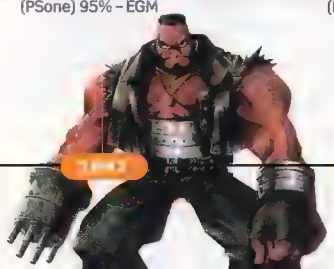
Chrono Trigger
(SNES) 92% – Electronic Gaming Monthly

Super Mario RPG
(SNES) 87% – EGM

Final Fantasy VII
(PSone) 95% – EGM

Xenogears
(PSone) 95% – IGN

Lunar: Silver Star Story
(PSone) 78% – GameSpot



1995 1996 1998 1999

Crossing the border The RPG elements in US-developed *Borderlands* were accomplished.

Japanese RPGs were a trusted, dependable source of quality gaming

staring at jobs, mortgages and kids, it's a formidable obstacle.

There was a time when J- RPGs were widely renowned as the future of storytelling. "It's the first RPG to surpass, instead of copy, movie-like storytelling." said Electronic Gaming Monthly of *FFVII* in 1997. Several factors made them unique when compared to Western role-players. Turn-based combat, engaging melodrama and vibrant, exotic worlds flirted shamelessly to create an experience that absorbed you into its universe. Tales of revenge, loss and redemption became hallmarks of the genre. They offered a flamboyant, unconventional take on the dreary realism of sci-fi and high fantasy that Western RPGs seemed obsessed with.

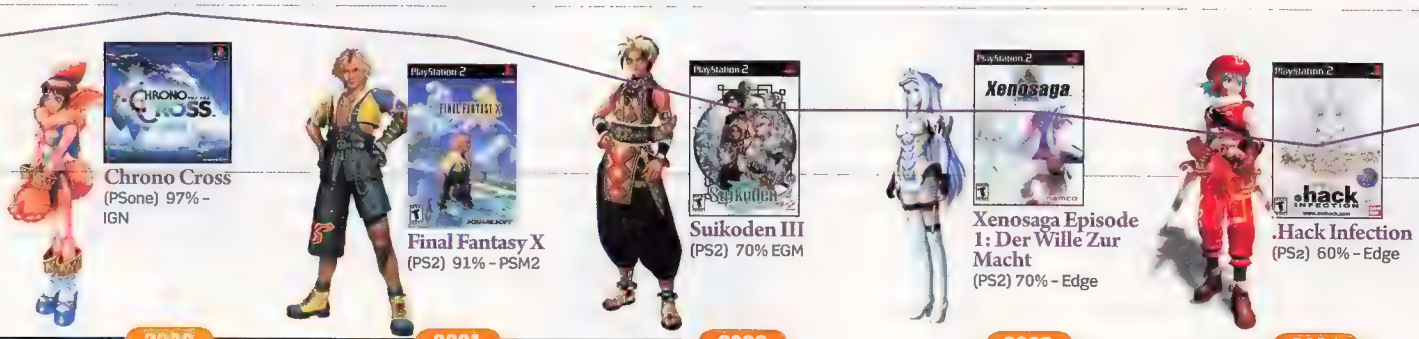
The '90s brought with them a 'golden age' of J-RPGs. Games such as *Earthbound* and *Final Fantasy VI* on the SNES and *Final Fantasy VII*, *Chrono Cross* and *Xenogears* on PSone went on to take a place in history as some of the most memorable games of all time.

Developers such as Square Enix (then, Squaresoft) became household names. J-RPGs became a dependable source of quality gaming.

But as young J-RPG die-hards have grown, so has the industry. Modern video games treat engaging plotlines as key aspects of the package – fighters, platformers, puzzlers, and shooters take their cues from RPGs, implementing many of the

Knight time It lacks the charm of the *FF* series, but *Oblivion* has solid RPG mechanics.

A J-RPG historical score chart continued



Losing faith **Capcom's Keiji Inafune and outspoken *Ninja Gaiden* creator Tomonobu Itagaki have both expressed concerns about the decline of the Japanese games biz.**

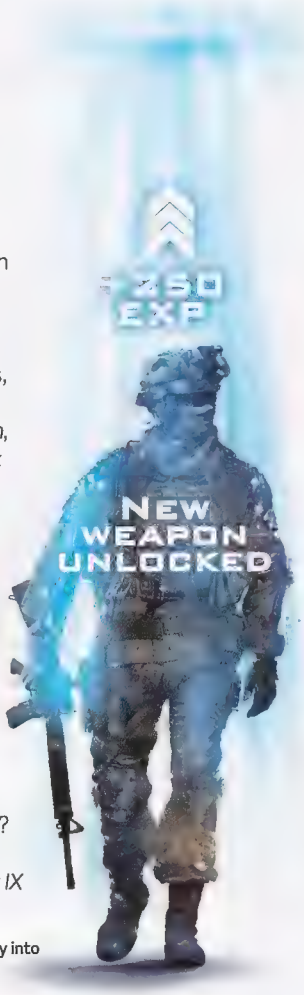
same themes and elements. Think *COD*'s EXP system, or character progression in *Borderlands*. Outlandish character designs and exotic worlds are more common than ever – we've become emotionally attached to characters outside of J-RPGs.

Western J-RPG fans are increasingly turning to developers on their own doorstep. Dozens of games offer the same freedom and customisation of J-RPGs, but they aren't hindered by the stale settings, themes and characters. These include *Fallout*, *Mass Effect*, *Oblivion*, *Knights of the Old Republic*, *Deus Ex* and *Dragon Age*.

"Western RPGs have evolved and embraced the next-gen consoles, developing and experimenting with new gameplay mechanics and story ideas (such as Good/Evil character choices, dialogue wheels, etc)" says Kim Richards. "Few J-RPGs break the mould. The slew of identical games and ports of classics is turning people off."

Is it just Western gamers that are growing disillusioned with the genre? The top ten best-selling games in Japan in 2009 include *Dragon Quest IX* (3.2 million), *Pokemon Gold* (6.5 million) and *Monster Hunter 3* (960,000) – all rooted in J-RPG sensibilities. While these are headline success stories, suggesting publishers don't need to take risks; the overall market is still dwindling. *Dragon Quest VIII* sold 6 million in 2005, but *FFXIII*'s sales currently stand at 2 million. Research suggests that Japanese gamers fear experimentation, but their numbers are shrinking – in a poll by Japanese games mag Dengeki, their readers' favourite games of 2009 were *Dragon Quest*, *Tales of Vesperia*, *Phantasy Star* and *FF XIII*. Western titles barely got a look in.

Failed attempts at recreating the magic of the classics have included *The Last Remnant* and *Infinite Undiscovery* – both by Square Enix, but both lack the personality and originality we've come to expect. So if the Japanese fear change, but the West craves innovation – how should J-RPGs move forward?



Level up **RPG elements have even made their way into blockbuster first-person shooters.**

The future

Rejecting traditional character archetypes and recycled storylines would be a step in the right direction. As would straying from established ideas. Focusing less on awe-inspiring visuals and making each experience original and memorable is crucial.

Decreased popularity should not be equated with failure, mind, and it's possible J-RPGs could continue to plow the same furrow to great financial success. The real issue might be with us. Perhaps the popularity of J-RPGs in the West was a phase, and we're now experiencing the hangover.

"The J-RPG feels like one of those dead film genres, like westerns or film noir," says Patrick Gann of RPGFan. "It's clear we reached the point of saturation a long time ago". Either way, the tension between the old world, and voices of dissent – often the premise of any great RPG – promises to lead the genre to a new, and intriguing place.

But there's still hope...

Five of the most promising RPGs heading to PS3

White Knight Chronicles

This is the first PS3 project by Level 5, who created some of the best RPGs on PS2 including *Dragon Quest* and *Dark Chronicle*. In fact, it features the same town-building Georama mode as Chronicle, letting you design and construct your own villages.

Resonance of Fate

This has all the hallmarks of a standard J-RPG, but with the inclusion of modern elements. So rather than swords, your party uses SMGs and grandes in combat. The fast-paced battle system is all about reactions and timing. It's all sewn together with slick choreographed action.

Alpha Protocol

This game from Obsidian features traditional RPG character development, but in a contemporary setting. It features a branching storyline, and the ability to defect to another faction mid-mission. More accessible than even *Fallout*, and as much a shooter as an RPG.

Fallout: New Vegas

This month's cover feature says it all. Bethesda have breathed new life into the *Fallout* series, and it's becoming a favourite of modern RPG fans thanks to its distinctive setting, freedom and customisation. Not bad for a forgotten PC series from the '90s.

Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 5

The Shin Megami Tensei series has consistently proven itself to be one of the most progressive, interesting Japanese RPGs of the last decade, and its first appearance on PS3 is more than welcome, after the last two 90+ scoring games slummed it on PS2. No details have emerged yet, but it's definitely on its way. Pray for a UK release.

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In the mag this month
God Of War complete history and exclusive review, giant Gran Turismo 5 playtest, hands-on with 3D gaming, plus Crysis 2, True Crime, and the spiritual successor to Black revealed.

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HIGHLIGHTS

***Final Fantasy* fills a Blu-ray**
Eyeing boobs in *Heavy Rain*
***MAG* brings 256 player-war**

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"Soon as you finish Heavy Rain, we guarantee you'll start a new game to explore the scenes you almost certainly missed"

Heavy Rain page 80

PSM3 BUY IT

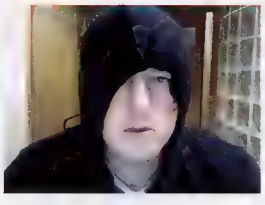
'Buy It' Award
If you see this, then you should buy that game.

THE TEAM

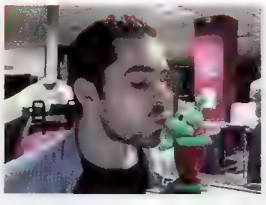
Grinding games for the +10 Verdict of Truth Sword

Daniel Dawkins
Specialist in Sports, endlessly watching Battlestar Galactica.
Playing *Bayonetta*: "Almost unlocked the sexy nun costume."

Andy Hartup
Specialist in First-person shooters, spending 24 hours in Los Angeles.
Playing *MAG*: "Get back here and heal me you selfish b***ards."



Andy Kelly
Specialist in Adventure games, having more than one haircut.
Playing *Heavy Rain*: "If only more games had full-frontal nudity."



Owen Hill
Specialist in Online, impressions of Zelda from TV show Terrahawks.
Playing *Battlefield BC2*: "I just can't stop pwning noobs. It's a sickness."

Matt Castle
Specialist in Survival horrors, knowing everything about Mario.
Playing *Silent Hill PSP*: "Creepy? Nah. Only soiled myself twice."

Format PS3 | Price £49.99 (360) | Release
Pub Square Enix | Dev Square Enix
Multi-player None | Trophies 36

Final Fantasy XIII

IMPORT

Stunning and strategic, but this linear, fan-splitting RPG takes 25 hours to hit stride...

Of course, you know what to expect. Someone let the would-be filmmakers at Square Enix loose on the PS3's Blu-ray capacity. It doesn't take a genius to work out that *Final Fantasy XIII*'s narrative ladles selfless heroics, histrionic melodrama and, above all, breathtaking CG modelling into a story so long and extravagant it makes Lawrence Of Arabia seem like a Laurel and Hardy short.

In a lavish civilisation manipulated by a Holy Government, the over-privileged inhabitants of the floating city Cocoon have been conditioned to fear the denizens of Pulse, the world below that spawned them. Meanwhile, a mystical race born of crystal, the godlike fal'Cie, pluck citizens they consider useful and brand them as l'Cie servants, imbuing them with magical powers to do the fal'Cie's bidding and turning them into crystal after they've served their purpose.

Crystal chronicles

It's this fate that hangs over the game's six playable characters, as they too are etched with the mark of l'Cie. But as the plot unfurls over the course of the 60-hour game, it actually gets harder to care about their plight – not least because so few of them are likeable in the first place. Heroine Lightning is the game's stoic central lead, but around her

"It gets harder and harder to care about their plight"

are a bunch of irritatingly cliched team members (see Light side, dark side). The main antagonists are also woefully underused, and the evil Galenth Dysley is a charisma-free zone. Sephiroth he ain't.

This would be forgivable if the gameplay were a little richer. For the first 25 hours or so of game time, it's as linear as a piece of string. There's no exploration, no side quests, no choice at all outside of battle. Characters are switched in and out with jarring frequency, and all you really have to do to progress is press up on the left analogue stick until the next short fight or extended cut-scene. Lightning jumps nimbly around the scenery, but you're still just pressing up. Snow enters a beachside bar or Sazh and Vanille visit a packed theme park, but there's no interaction whatsoever.

Moving on up

In the end, the backgrounds – while gorgeously detailed – are so superficial they cease to matter. Just keep pushing up and you'll get to the next bit. In terms of level design, it's less sophisticated than Pac-Man. Although you can usually control the camera with the right stick, it sometimes becomes fixed without warning, reinforcing the nagging feeling that the player is barely relevant to the game. The occasional puzzles aren't rocket science, either. One

KNOW IT NOW

- Groundbreaking cut-scenes? ☑
- An overblown storyline? ☑
- An improved battle system? ☒
- Lots of different narrative paths? ☒

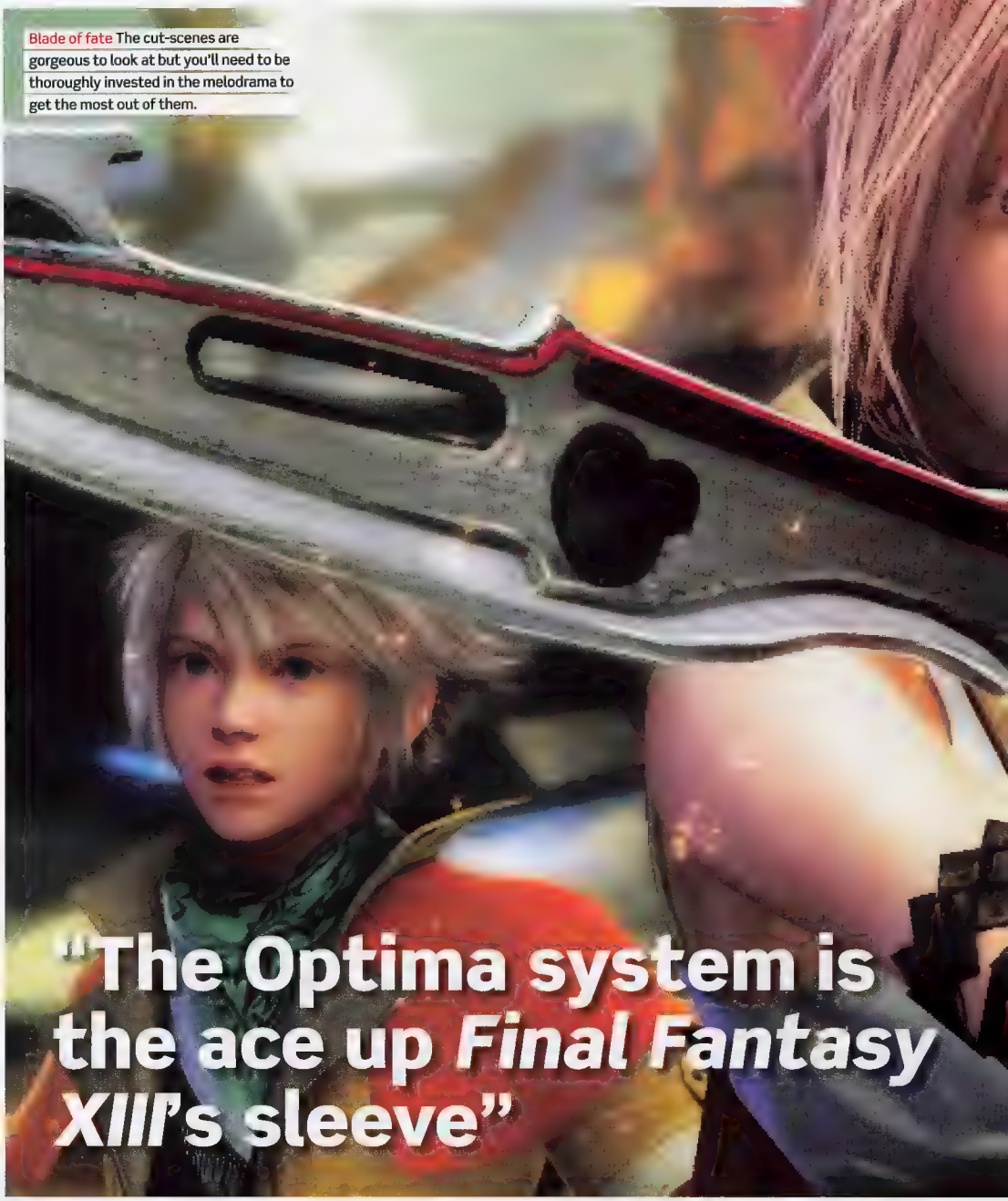
has you pressing switches on four separate machines to proceed, first dispatching the monsters that guard them. Another – possibly the most tedious, infantile mini-game in history – has you chasing Sazh's pet Chocobo around a pre-determined series of scenes. What is this, 'My First RPG'?

The battle system alone offers a chance to flex the grey matter and implement a bit of strategy. Monsters are visible on the map, so no random encounters, and fights are fast paced. Taking direct control of just the party leader, you assign commands to the Active Battle Gauge (or use the automated feature to save valuable seconds) using ◎; these are unleashed as a combo attack when the bar is full. Most commands take up one ATB slot, but the more powerful ones require two or more.

Time these to go off in between attacks from your AI party members and you'll not only sap your enemy's HP but also fill their Break bar. Once they enter a Break state, you can close in for the kill, dealing major damage until they either recover or die. In other words, focusing your attacks on one foe at a time and with the right rhythm allows you to eliminate them faster. Happily, monsters have their own energy bar, so you know when it's better to pause for that pee.

System Specs

The Optima system (known in the West as Paradigm) is the ace up *FFXIII*'s sleeve. To start with, each party member can use three of six Roles, similar to the Jobs in previous *Final Fantasy* entries. An Attacker fights with weapons, a Blaster with magic; an Enhancer buffs up party members while a Jammer debuffs enemies; and Defenders



Blade of fate The cut-scenes are gorgeous to look at but you'll need to be thoroughly invested in the melodrama to get the most out of them.

"The Optima system is the ace up *Final Fantasy XIII*'s sleeve"

Star cast

Light side, dark side

Who's who in FFXIII's underwhelming cast of characters

LIGHTNING

Ex-soldier Lightning's out to save her sister, Sera, who has been marked as a l'Cie. Icy and strong, she nurses a dislike for Sera's fiancé, Snow.
Main Role Attacker.

SNOW VILLIERS

Optimistic to the point of nausea, Snow has brawn but not much upstairs. He's engaged to Sera, much to Lightning's annoyance, and hopes to rescue her.
Main Role Defender.

SAZH KATZROY

Sazh speaks irritating gutter Japanese. Also, his afro nests a baby Chocobo. He's searching for his son, Dodge, who has also become l'Cie.
Main Role Blaster.

OERBA DIA VANILLE

Despite a dark past and being handy in a scrap, Vanille has a perky disposition that quickly grates, and talks to people like either they're an idiot or she is.
Main Role Healer.

HOPE ESTHEIM

Who ate all the Phoenix Downs? Yes, Hope is pretty much hopeless. A moody teenager from a sheltered home, he blames Snow for his mother's death.
Main Role Enhancer.

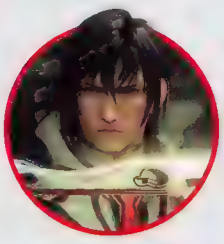
OERBA YUN FANG

Stubborn and cool, Fang shares a mysterious past with Vanille and brings some solid balls to the team. Ironically, she was originally written as a male character.
Main Role Jammer.

Monster mash
The monster design is impressively ludicrous. The Yuijinshan has a long wobbly nose and an onion head; the Phalanx is an overgrown accordion; and the Birujibasu lizards each have Tony Blair's face.

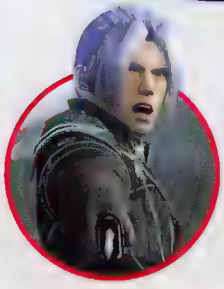
Goodies — Baddies

GALENTH DYSLEY
Head of Sanctum, Cocoon's Holy Government, Galenth is revered by the people. But is he all he seems to be? Clue: Of course not.



CID RAINES
A brigadier general in the Sanctum Guardian Corps air force, Cid's story is tragic, but you won't likely feel sorry for him when he batters you in a boss fight.

RYGDEA
A bit of a non-entity for much of the game, Rygdea nonetheless plays a small but crucial role in the story's resolution.



YAAG ROSCH
Lightning's old boss in Sanctum's PSICOM force, Yaag pops up throughout the game and, like Cid and Rygdea, has an ambiguous role in the tale.

JIHL NABAAT
Another somewhat wasted baddie, mega-bitch Jihl faces up to Lightning's band of heroes with spite and bile, but... well, we won't spoil it for you. But it sucks.

Hidden powers

The best Summon attacks revealed

How to win Eidolons and influence people

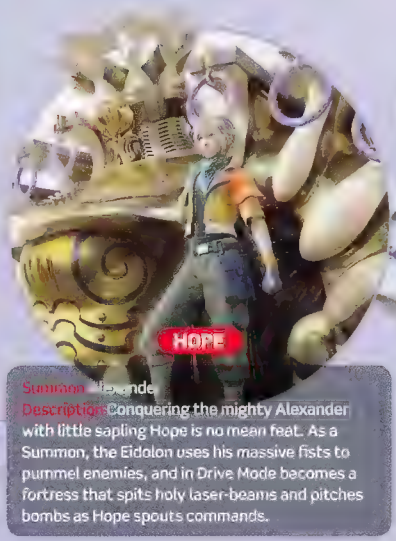
A staple of the *Final Fantasy* universe since the series' third instalment, Summons are gargantuan magical allies. But first they must be beaten; each is prone to certain attacks (or defensive manoeuvres), but you'd better be quick to beat that Doom countdown. Once tamed, you can have them fight alongside you or transform into a vehicle to ride.

FANG

Summon: Bahamut
Description: This [illegible] humanoid dragon, series mainstay Bahamut looks scary but is not difficult to tame, once Fang gets her Jam on. In Drive Mode he becomes a leathery winged jet, which Fang rides like something out of *Panzer Dragoon*.

LIGHTNING

Summon: Odin
Description: [illegible]ning, this god of Norse legend is the second [illegible]. Face him with [illegible] of characters [illegible], he is also susceptible to healing magic. Once he's on side, turn him into a horse and jump on to decimate enemies.



HOPE

Summon: [illegible]ander
Description: Conquering the mighty Alexander with little sapling Hope is no mean feat. As a Summon, the Eidolon uses his massive fists to pummel enemies, and in Drive Mode becomes a fortress that spits holy laser-beams and pitches bombs as Hope spouts commands.

SAZH

Summon: [illegible]
Description: [illegible] Brynhildr, he is at his most epic having [illegible] to [illegible] Hyperion. He proves [illegible] Fury [illegible] Bolt [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

VANILLE

Summon: Hecatonchires
Description: Interrupting Vanille and Fang mid-conversation (how rude), mythical Greek god Hecatonchires resembles a droid with 100 arms and casts powerful magic that turns the very earth against you. Once he's part of the family, Vanille can ride him like a mech walker, with his many limbs rearranged into miniguns.

SNOW

Summon Shiva
Description Unlike in previous *Final Fantasy* games, Shiva is now a pair of twin sisters, Styria and Nix. With their ice and water powers, it's fitting that they are summoned by Snow. In Drive Mode, the ladies turn into a motorcycle for Snow to ride. With his groin in their faces. Charming.

Chop chop Auto-chain doesn't always select the most effective attacks on offer, but you'll be grateful for it the second it saves you from a tricky situation.

draw attacks while Healers heal the remainder of the team.

You can customise six different Optima formations and switch between them in battle. So with a party of three, you may choose to quickly Break an enemy with an Attacker/Blaster/Blaster Optima, switching mid-battle to throw in a Healer as necessary, and so on. You don't control your teammates' actions so much as the team itself.

Even when you find your preferred Optima set-up, you'll have to rearrange them often, as certain monsters and bosses are susceptible to specific combinations of Roles. Also, the story forces changes upon you as party members come and go. For example, Snow might hang back to try to dig his fiancée (who's turned into a giant crystal) out of a lake (which has also turned into a giant crystal – talk about futile), and suddenly you've lost your only party member capable of a Defender role at that point.

The battle system takes time to master and is gradually implemented over the game's first ten hours or so, with tutorials written eye-scrunchingly small. However, much of the first 20 hours has your team splintered into small groups through a series of plot contrivances, hampering the strategy element, and battles can feel more like balancing a spreadsheet than playing a game. It does gel, but newcomers will have to be patient.

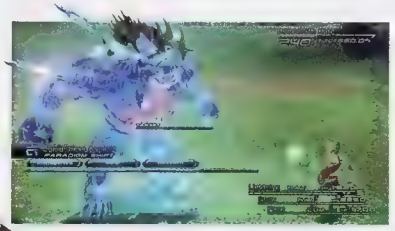
Battle tactics **Juggle your team's Optima formations, pick an enemy to gang up on and time your attacks to quickly fill their Break Gauge (top right), then move in for the kill.**

Into the fray Monsters are visible on the playing field. You can choose your battles.

Help from your friends

As ever, your characters can unleash epic Summons, or Eidolons (see page 70), to tackle fierce bosses. As in *FFXII*, characters must tame his or her Eidolon in battle to earn their protection. Once beaten, only the Eidolon belonging to the party leader (who you don't get to pick until halfway through the game) can be used on enemies. You can fight alongside the Eidolon or mount it in Drive Mode (Gestalt in the Western version) to pull off heavy attacks for a limited time. For maximum effect, Break an enemy before summoning your Eidolon.

Winning battles rewards your party with Tactical Points needed for Summons and other spells, plus Crystal



Monster hunter The Gran Pulse map in Chapter 11 is all about grinding monsters and farming CP.

Points, which you can spend on levelling up their various Roles for increased abilities and HP in the Crystarium (tap △). 'Grinding' through maps and battles is essential, sadly, or you'll be seriously under strength for the next big encounter.

About 30 hours in, the game opens up. As the group flee the futuristic techtopia of Cocoon for the plains of Gran Pulse, a series of side missions open on a vast map though these do just consist of more samey battles. Hardcore final fantasy fans will find much joy in farming CP from the respawning monsters that populate Gran Pulse, allowing for major upgrades that make your team near-invincible. Others will have switched off hours ago.

Flab of the land

Final Fantasy XIII's grand ambition is also its downfall. The game feels bloated and repetitive – too much movie, not enough game.

Ample items

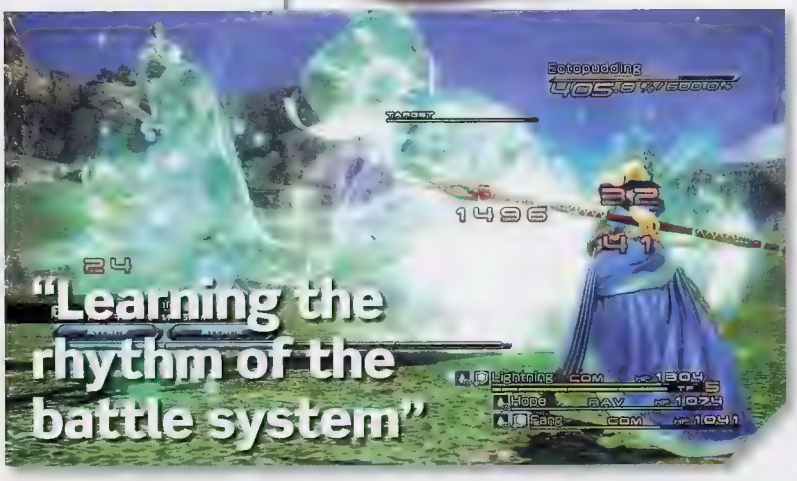
The hundreds of items found throughout the game can be used in battles or to upgrade weapons, meaning many hours of combining, dismantling, trading and tinkering.

The cheesy characterisations and overwrought dialogue (at least in the Japanese version) will make you cringe – and there must be over 25 hours of movies. Some cut-scenes and syrupy flashbacks are so long they can be paused, appear on your map and have their own save points.

Yes, it looks amazing – from the lines on their lips to the soles of their shoes, the detail in the character models is unreal – and the battle system, though repetitive, is fun. While *FFXIII* is advertised as an RPG, the main role you play is that of viewer.

Worth importing? Japanese speakers aside – wait until March 9th in the UK. Series' stalwarts will appreciate the successful fusion of *FFIV*'s ATB system and *FFXII*'s real-time battles, while enemies appear in the field, like *FFXII*, doing away with random encounters. If you've not played an RPG since PSone classic *FFVII*, you'll relish the slick combat and next-gen sheen, but for some, the series' most grandiose and obtrusive narrative to date, may prove too big a hurdle. **Daniel Robson**

Fave Feature



PSM3 Verdict

***Final Fantasy XIII* contains...**
Gorgeous visuals | Sleek mechanics
An overwrought story | That's it

Overall Looks the part, but we'd hoped for more variety in its 60-hour sweep.

70

Format PS3 | **Price** £50 | **Release** Out now
Pub EA | **Dev** Visceral Games
Multi-player None | **Trophies** 43

Dante's Inferno

Fun and gory action that stumbles in Kratos' footsteps

There's no denying it – *Dante's Inferno* is a damn near carbon copy of *God of War*. It's shameless about it too. From obvious things, such as humongous boss fights, to minor stuff like the way Dante scurries along walls in exactly the same way as Kratos, EA's hack-and-slasher is brazen in its plagiaristic ways. As such, a rip-off like this deserves a scalding hot jug of scorn poured over it, right? Well, if it wasn't any good it would, but thankfully *Dante's Inferno* is bloody good fun.

Visceral Games – the team behind ace sci-fi shooter *Dead Space* – have done an outstanding job of mimicking the feel of *God Of War* to the point where the control scheme from the retuned *God Of War Collection* (PSM3 #123 85%) transfers seamlessly to *Dante's Inferno*. This is no mean feat. Loads of games have tried to copy the *GOW* formula over the years, but none have even come close until now. Yet aside from the Kratos comparisons, Dante manages to stand on his own two feet on PS3.

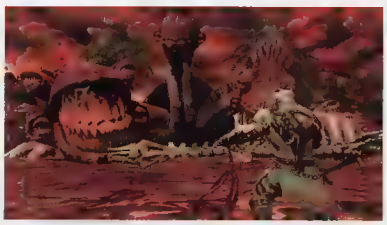
Divine inspiration

For those who don't know, *Dante's Inferno* is based loosely on a 14th century poem called The Divine Comedy. But whereas in the poem, Dante is depicted as an idiot who's lost in the woods, EA's take is that he's a bad-ass crusader who's been tricked into slaughtering thousands of innocent people and cheating on his missus with a slave girl. Who hasn't though, eh? What follows is Dante's chase for his beloved Beatrice through the nine circles of Hell as he tries to rescue her from Mr Evil himself, Lucifer. This involves killing – and lots of it.

While it's not quite on the same stylish level as *Bayonetta* (PSM3 #122 90%) the action in *Dante's Inferno* is nothing short of exciting. If you're not notching up violent 100+ combos with his scythe (you wrestle it from the Grim Reaper pretty early on), then you're knocking winged beasts from the air with the Blessed attack from Beatrice's cross (◎). You'll also pick up some spells along the way.

The developers have brought over the upgrade system from *Dead Space*, too. Thankfully, you won't have to find/buy nodes to improve your scythe or cross skills. Instead, you collect souls much as you do in *Devil May Cry*, then spend them on new combos, extending your magic/health gauge or learning some sacred moves (read: critical hit finishers).

Taking a leaf out of *inFamous*' book, you can also choose whether Dante will be nasty or nice. This has zero impact on the story – which may have spiced up the drab plot somewhat – but it does mean that a) you can choose whether to make your scythe (evil) or your cross (good) more powerful and b) when you find a tortured soul you can either absolve their sins or poke the sharp end of your scythe through their head. These tortured souls are historical figures such as Boudica, who beg Dante to end their suffering – be it via the violent method or the holy one. To



Bigmouth strikes again This toothy freak is Dante's take on the evil Cerberus. He's easy to kill.

Dante's Inferno
KNOW IT NOW
A hell-skinned God Of War 2.5?
The most bare nipples on PS3?
Highly enjoyable beast riding?
X

Boss battles

The nine levels of Hell

Find out the horrors that await you in every circle...

LIMBO

Blind fury This huge beast might be sightless, but he's one of the toughest bosses to get past.

LUST

Booby prize Beat Cleopatra and her minions and you'll unlock the lust cloud ability.

GLUTTONY

Hungry horror Fat? Yes. Lumbering? No. The fatties of Gluttony are alarmingly quick.

HERESY

No tricks Don't bother trying any magic tricks in Heresy – most of its minions are immune to them.

GREED

Siamese spins These guys are joined at the hip for all eternity as they were selfish in life. LoL.

ANGER

Too hot to handle In the land of lava you'll meet this thing called Charon. He spits fire at you. A hell of a lot.

VIOLENCE

Big daddy This bloke is Dante's dad. He's a nasty piece of work so getting revenge is satisfying.

HERESY

Winging it You'll have to strip the wings off these beasts before offing them with your scythe.

TREASON

Devil May Die Dante's ultimate foe is Beelzebub himself. Who will win? Clue: Dante.

Hot cross fun The holy cross attacks are excellent for linking together huge combos. Or hacking.

Judge Dread You have to make a decision about some of the character's fates. We prefer to Punish.

Do the twist Spinning enemies like these are really annoying – you should block until they've finished then kill 'em.

be honest, absolving victims' sins is a pain in the arse because you have to go through the same monotonous mini-game every time. Sure, you can earn more souls to spend on moves this way, but cutting into the action for 30 seconds at a time with the same old routine is boring. Hence why most of the beggars we come across get the short shrift and the pointy scythe.

Deadly dull

But it's not just absolving that becomes tired in *Dante's Inferno*. While the game starts at breakneck speed, with you fighting Death and a giant woman who spits babies with blades for arms from her teats (honestly), the later stages dwindle into predictability. There's a climby bit, then a swingy bit, a fighty bit, and then some puzzly bits before the boss bit, and repeat to fade. Worse still is the fact that the last circle – though we won't ruin it for you here – is a selection of time trials à la *GoW*'s Challenge of the Gods mode. It's like the developers just gave up before the finish line. The game's also relentlessly bleak. From murdering babies to hearing souls crying or cursing, don't expect rainbows here.

There are also a few balancing issues. They're only minor, but they affect your overall enjoyment. For example, if you only have a tiny bit of energy at a checkpoint and then you die, you only get that tiny bit back when you restart. Also, some of the double jumps you have to perform are ill-measured, leaving you cursing into the sky about how you've been wronged. Oh, and it's only about six hours long.

The main problem with *Dante's Inferno* is that the excitement peaks halfway through. You'll play to the end to see what Dante's fate holds, but for the most part you won't care about his story because the cut-scenes and the dreary Virgil, fail to grab your attention. The bosses are huge, but they don't stick in the memory like say, the fight with Ares in *GOW* or the battle with the colossus at the beginning of *GoWII*.

Virgil's vigil That pale fellow is Virgil. Your beloved Beatrice asks him to keep an eye on Dante before she's kidnapped by Satan. We wish she hadn't as he's a right boring git.

Door men The most pointless part of *Dante's Inferno* is the way you open loads of demon-guarded doors. You have to ram the scythe into them and tap ◎ until they relent and open. Yawn.

But for all its downsides, *Dante's Inferno* is certainly action-packed and includes a few things that *God of War III* will be looking to better, such as the brilliant beast-riding sections. Is it worth your time? Absolutely. Slashing up demons is always fun, and *Dante's* crams in enough fodder to make your thumb beg for mercy. It also looks beautiful. In fact, it's got possibly the best boob rendering we've ever seen in a game – and we're not referring to gross ones that fire babies. Most titles copy the trailblazers in their genre at some point or another, but many fail to capture the genius. *Dante's Inferno* does it almost perfectly and still finds time to set itself apart from the game it so longs to be. **Nathan Irvine**

Fave Feature

PSM3 Verdict

***Dante's Inferno* contains...**
Inverted nipples | Plenty of sinners
Gluttons | 1000ft-tall beasts

Overall Solid action that's let down by a weak story and lack of momentum.

80

Format PSP | **Price** $30 | **Release** Out now (US) March 5 (UK)
Pub Konami | **Dev** Climax
Multi-player None | **Trophies** n/a

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories

PSP re-imagining of the PSone original gets under your skin...

Silent Hill does two things very well: ambiguous, meaty horrors and plot twists. Like a Turkey Twizzler, really. The former is simple: take the contents of a deli counter and add legs. But it's the series' world-rocking revelations that win it major plaudits. There's brains in all that meat – *Silent Hill 2*'s conclusion still defines video game twists. And after their fine, if unambitious, PSP prequel *Origins*, Climax have now added a few more smarts, this time grafted onto a retelling of the first *Silent Hill*.

Psyche out

Before play even begins, *Shattered Memories* claims to 'play you as much as you play it'. No, it doesn't hastily cosh you with a lead pipe, but subjects you to psychoanalysis. A personality test kicks things off, with further tests book-marking the tale. Moral dilemmas, colouring exercises, Rorschach images – it *feels* adult, smart and fresh. Allegedly, your test results shape *Memories* into a personal nightmare. Alas, this amounts to little more than re-skinned props and alternate endings. In one run-through you visit a bar, while in the next it's a diner. Your guts don't knot, but shrug.

This wouldn't be a problem if there was more to *Shattered Memories* than this so-called adaptable horror. As it is, Climax seem to think they're above traditional scares. Gone is the rusty Otherworld with its juddering gristle nurses, replaced with icy nightmare sequences. And gone is the combat, replaced with, er, running away. Love it or hate it, *Hill*'s shambling melee bashing was a key part of forcing you to get up close and personal with its various horrors. Panic is born in awkwardness and confinement, sprinting is free and exciting – as scary as *Mirror's Edge*.

Familiar places Bar the missing daughter story, this is practically unrecognisable from the original *Hill*, but returning fans will enjoy the hidden mementos of the first game.

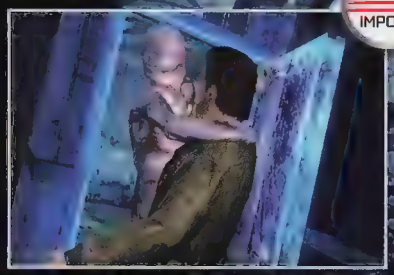
Mechanics Puzzles have a nice organic feel, with answers naturally worked into Harry's surroundings.

Freudian slips

Worse, the beasties are confined to nightmares. Outside of these segments there's nothing to harm or kill you, instantly deflating the threatening atmosphere. Exploring the town lets Climax show off their expert command of PSP visuals, but these segments play out like the world's dullest point and click adventure. Find keys, talk to creepy residents, solve puzzles using your iPhone lookalike – as long as you don't see ice, nothing will get you.

Grounding *Silent Hill* in reality is a neat idea. God knows the rusted hospital/school shtick was growing, well, rusty. But *Shattered Memories* goes a step too far, anchoring the game outside of horror. Climax have taken the cerebral gameplay a little too far.

Matthew Castle



IMPORT

Monster mash If they catch Harry up, the horrors will resort to cruel playground bundling tactics.

PSM3 Verdict

***Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* contains...**
Cowardly fleeing | Touch screen phones
Lovely torchlight | No bloody meat

Overall Meaty horror turns vegan in a smart, visually-impressive but scare-free PSP rebirth.

65

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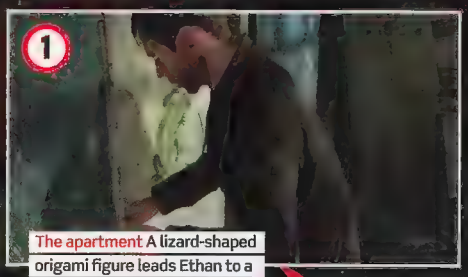
Format PS3 | **Price** £40 | **Release** February 24
Pub Sony | **Dev** Quantic Dream
Multi-player 1 | **Trophies** 50

Test yourself

No pain, no gain

The killer has Ethan's son. To get him back, he has to cut off his own finger. Cue *Heavy Rain*'s most gruesome scene...



1

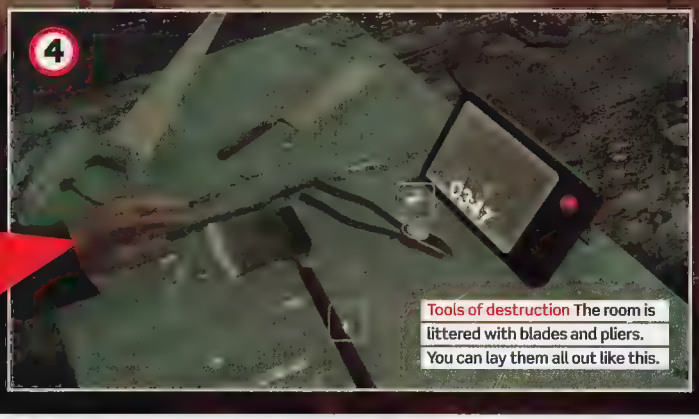
The apartment A lizard-shaped origami figure leads Ethan to a burned-out block of flats.

2

The test A voice tells him he has five minutes to chop the tip of a finger off before the camera.

3

Safety first Thinking fast, Ethan heats up a metal bar. Why? To cauterise the wound after he's sliced his finger off, of course. You can skip this part if you like.



4

Tools of destruction The room is littered with blades and pliers. You can lay them all out like this.

Heavy Rain

Tragic, sexy, confusing and totally unforgettable

The cut Ethan screams his head off as he hacks at his pinky. The saw is the most painful/impractical option. It takes about four attempts to get through the bone...

Burned out The screams get louder as Ethan seals the wound. It might be the most horrific scene in any game, ever. Hard to watch, hard to listen to.

The clue Succeed and you get a clue to your son's location. Fail, or chicken out, and you get nowt.

KNOW IT NOW

- Four playable characters? ☑
- Loads of replay value? ☑
- Amazingly realistic visuals? ☑
- The future of video games? ☒

This is a game that promises two things: being adult, and being original. But that's misleading, because while it does have elements of both, it's also one of the most derivative games ever made, with moments that aren't so much adult as exploitative. So for every scene that explores sophisticated subject matter, like bereavement or mental illness, there's one where you have to strip to your pants and wiggle your arse in the face of a far-fetched cartoon gangster, or undo a girl's bra.

Stick 'em up Jayden gets into a dangerous situation with ex-con, junkyard owner and lunatic, Mad Jack.

Its originality lies in the way that it eschews familiar gaming tropes in favour of pure storytelling. The narrative takes precedence over everything else, so if you want to shoot lasers or collect magic bananas, this isn't for you. It's essentially a nine-hour film that you nudge along by following on-screen button prompts, although you feel more connected with the action than this might suggest.

Touchy feely

Say you're trying to climb something. First you'd grab the ledge with your left hand, by pressing L1 when prompted. Then you hit R1 to grab with your right. And while still holding both buttons in, you tap ⊗ to haul yourself up. It seems convoluted on paper, but Quantic Dream have done a commendable job of making these arbitrary button combinations feel physically linked to your character.

In more frantic scenes – like escaping from a locked car sinking slowly to the bottom of a lake – the combinations become increasingly more spread across the controller, forcing you into a game of finger Twister. The more fraught the situation, the more complicated the button prompts are, which helps draw you into the moment.

Other ways to interact with the world include gently moving the analogue stick to perform delicate actions like applying eyeliner in a nightclub toilet, or rocking a baby to sleep. Then there are the frequent Sixaxis moments that see you quickly lifting the controller up to kick a door in, or moving it slowly from side to side to brush your teeth. Other times it's as simple as pushing one of the face buttons to dodge an incoming punch.

Tall tale

But what about the story? Well, it's good – *mostly*. At the core of everything are the Origami Murders, the work of a nefarious killer who kidnaps children and murders them, leaving paper animals as his calling card. And there are four playable characters, all of who have been affected by the murders in some way – an asthmatic private detective, an FBI profiler, a depressed father and an insomniac journalist.

But that's all we're saying, because anything more would spoil

PSM3 BUY IT

Choose your path Choices like this might not seem that important, but they can have a big impact on your end-game.

the one thing that makes the game so compelling: finding out what happens next. The story is well told. It keeps you guessing who the killer is right up until the very end, with some devious – if slightly cheap – misdirection. It's like a TV box set: when one 'episode' ends, the urge to immediately follow it with another is impossible to resist. But there are some elements that don't work so well. Without going into too much detail, some of the characters seem too quick to trust each other.

Oh, and the romance scenes are shameful. Not only because the sex itself looks robotic and awkward, but because the characters' relationship blooms despite A) the pair not knowing a thing about each other B) having met just a day previously. This inanity is only compounded by searching one of the character's thoughts after the unwieldy love-making (by holding R2) and hearing her ponder that she may be in love. *Already?* It's an attempt to be 'adult' that fails spectacularly, coming across as little more than a flimsy excuse to see some tits.

"When one episode ends, the urge to immediately follow it with another is impossible to resist"

Sex appeal Okay, we'll admit it – we fancy Madison a bit.

Desk tidy Jayden's visor lets you examine clues, files and evidence in a weird VR world with adjustable 'themes' including a forest, the surface of Mars and under the sea. It's one of the highlights.

Looks to kill

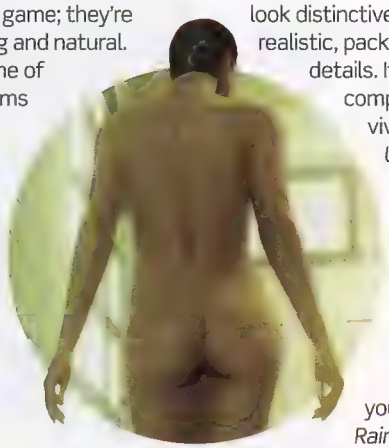
Speaking of which, the character models are superb. Whether it's private eye Scott Shelby's greasy, wrinkled skin, or journalist Madison Paige, dripping wet, in the shower (where very little is left to the imagination), you won't believe the detail. Simply, they're the most convincing digital actors

Pipe dream Fights are nicely choreographed, but seem difficult to fail, even when you miss prompts.

Child's play One of the best scenes sees Shelby saving a suicidal mother, then taking care of her baby. You feed her, change her nappy and rock her to sleep.

we've ever seen in a game; they're expressive, engaging and natural. It's just a shame some of the voice acting seems amateurish.

The world is beautifully rendered, too. It's set in a perpetually rain-soaked, unnamed American city and the attention to detail is masterful. Rather than static 'film sets', every environment – from the characters' apartments, to hospitals and motels – look distinctively lived-in and realistic, packed with incidental details. It may seem grim compared to the exotic, vivid world of *Uncharted 2*, but by being so steeped in realism, it helps you relate to the world, and as a result the story seems more convincing.



The only reason you won't like *Heavy Rain* is how little it feels like a 'game'. At least in the traditional sense. The only bit that feels distinctively *gamey* is when you're using Jayden's futuristic visor to track down clues at crime scenes. Here, it feels like a vintage point-and-click adventure, with added QTEs. Think the detective scenes in *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, but much more detailed and involving. Otherwise, it's simply a case of dutifully following prompts and watching the plot unfold.

Tied up
Some of the game's odder activities include doing up a guy's tie, making an omelette, juggling and sketching plans for a house. Mundane, sure, but weirdly compelling.

But the best thing about *Heavy Rain* is how it branches. Every choice you make alters the outcome of the story in a number of dramatic ways. It's even possible for the main characters to *die* if you're careless with the timing of the action scenes. And if they do, the story continues regardless. As soon as you finish the game, we guarantee you'll immediately start a new game to explore the scenes you almost certainly missed, or alternate dialogue.

This makes the game feel unique, despite every major scene being 'inspired by' a film, and the occasionally crude sexual content. But rest assured, you've never played a game quite like *Heavy Rain* before. **Andy Kelly**

Fave Feature

"Being forced to drive the wrong way up the freeway by the killer"

PSM3 Verdict

***Heavy Rain* contains...**
Nudity | Violence | Lots of men crying | Drizzle | Night clubs

Overall Unique, gorgeous and absorbing, but not without its flaws.

88

Format PS3 | **Price** £45 | **Release** Out now
Pub Sony | **Dev** Media Zipper
Multi-player 2-256 | **Trophies** 40

MAG

Enjoyable, but intimidating 256-player shooter lacks polish...

Does *MAG* manage to deliver a solid, playable 256-player online experience? Absolutely. Technically, it's a masterpiece of clever network coding and an impressive showcase of what's possible when developers really get to grips with the PlayStation Network.

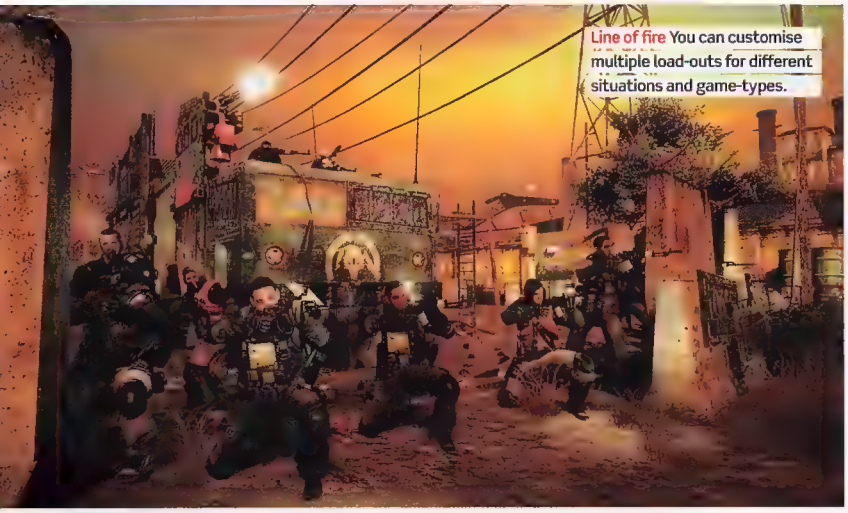
As with Zipper's other online shooter, *SOCOM*, this game lacks personality and that explosive wow-factor, which rivals like *Modern Warfare 2* and *Battlefield Bad Company 2* have in spades. During combat, be it the 'smaller' 64 player skirmishes or the full-fat 256 player battles, you never really get the feeling that you're doing anything of that much consequence; that you're contributing to the larger war effort – it's more about individual squad objectives and personal character advancement – at least early on. Blow up an AA gun to grant your commander the ability to use air support and you're treated to a lame explosion, +15 XP, and a message telling you to move to the next target. It can sometimes feel like a thankless grind, and never conveys the feeling that you're part of a huge battle between hundreds of virtual soldiers – until you get to the higher levels of command that is.

Epic fail

And when you don't get the wow-factor of its massive scale, *MAG* is nothing more than an average online shooter. Sure, the shooting is balanced – though you'll have to get used to lining up headshots to avoid frustration. Well-armoured enemies can take a *lot* of bullets before going down. The sniper especially feels ridiculously under-powered, and we found it just as easy to pick people off from distance using standard assault rifles.

As you level up, you can spend XP to enhance guns with grips and sights like Infinity Ward's game, but the 'perk' style character additions are far more grounded in reality.

Similarly, the command options – where squad leaders, platoon leaders and the OIC co-ordinate the attack feel underwhelming. During our review session, where headsets were provided, players largely ignored squad objectives and commands in favour of stampeding into the middle of the map like cattle – an experience that will almost certainly be mirrored in your



Line of fire You can customise multiple load-outs for different situations and game-types.

KNOW IT NOW

- 256-player battles that work? ☑
- Three factions and loads of weapons? ☑
- Completely lag free online play? ☑
- Will appeal to the average FPS fan? ☒

Factions

Choose your army

Introducing the three subtly different factions in *MAG*...

SVER

These guerrilla fighters are the most low-tech of the three, so their weapon and special abilities are more focused on raw power than precision. They appear to be the most unified of the three, and are currently winning the Shadow War.

RAVEN

The high-tech boys from Europe, Raven are – according to *MAG* lore – the least experienced in combat. We found them to be made up of younger players, who shriek a lot, but don't actually talk much sense.

VALOR

Highly-trained American veterans, Valor are the toughest and most experienced group in the game. This is reflected in their reliance on quality assault rifles, and efficiency. Expect plenty of patriotic American gamers.

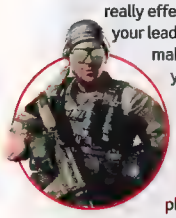
Pro tips

Dominate the battle

Designer Ben Jones shares his secrets on how to be king of the 256 player match

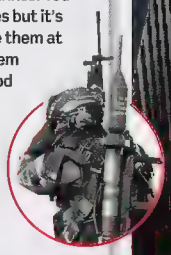
Zipper's tips for beginners

"The biggest thing is to play with your squad. That's so key with *MAG*. If you're communicating with them and coordinating with your squad leader you're going to be really effective. From there – stick with your leaders, follow their orders, and make sure you're always healing your allies – not letting them bleed out. Really push the flow of battle forward."



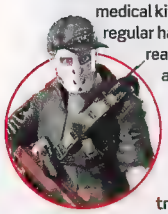
Zipper's tips for leaders

"Communication is critical. As a platoon commander, you can change between channels and talk to the various squad commanders within your platoon. As OIC you can send a platoon-wide broadcast to say "Hey this is what we're really pushing for now" – so that is important. The other thing is calling in effective strikes. You have these amazing special abilities but it's important that not only do you use them at the right time, but that you use them effectively at a critical point. A good example is when you're taking out the AA guns on larger maps. Once you destroy it you can maybe get one wave of parachute jumps in before the enemy regroup and repair it. An effective tactic for a commander is to destroy the AA then immediately thrown down an airstrike on it, denying the enemy any chance to repair it."



Zipper's top custom load-outs

"The one I've been using a lot recently is the shotgun with red-dot sight and a faster reload ability. I use an SMG as a back-up, an upgraded medical kit, an acoustic locator and just regular hand-grenades. That means you're really effective in close quarters, and with the acoustic locator you can track any enemies coming at you. It's great for defending."



"If I'm a sniper, I take the motion sensor every time. It's huge, because it allows you to track any enemies on the map at any time – even if they're hiding in long grass. You also wanted upgrade optics. Increased stability is important too, so you'll need the custom foregrip or the deployable bipod. Play around with your character options in terms of your camo too, to help you blend into the scenery better."

Wish you were here Certain factions will never get to see some of the maps. A critical oversight considering how much time the dedicated will spend in each.

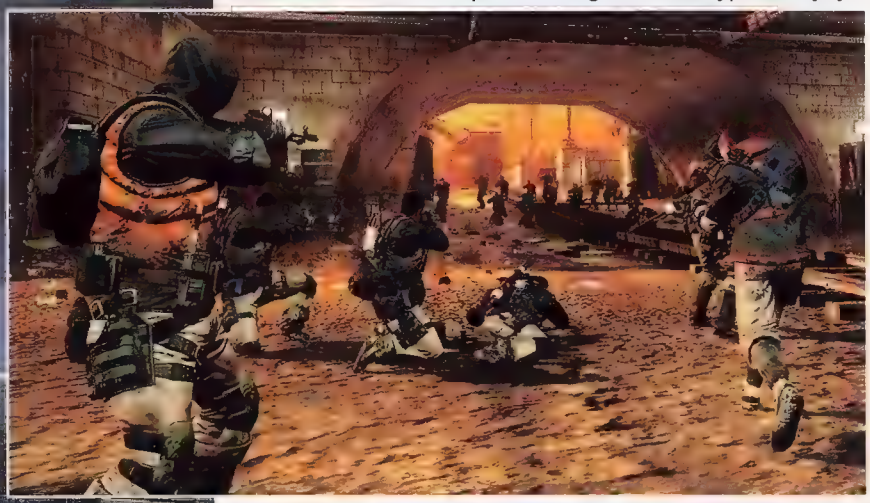
first few sessions. The result can often feel like a massive, endless corridor of death in the centre of the stage, which you can currently 'enjoy' in any regular online FPS. It's a shame, because the theory behind the big-scale battles on well-designed, though repetitive, maps is sound.

Following orders

Your squad is meant to tackle micro-objectives in stages, with everyone contributing to the overall victory. So, depending on the commander's choice, one squad might be tasked with eliminating defences like turrets and AA guns. It sounds great on paper, but fails to accommodate the average, egotistical online gamer who just wants to blow stuff up and feel like a badass. However we've noticed that, as player's learn the mechanics, the double XP 'Frago' bonuses for getting kills, healing members of your faction, or supporting your squad, along with the subtle buffs (increased running speed, more resistant armour) that kick in when you're close to your squad leader, do a good job of encouraging players to follow orders and make efforts to co-ordinate. As for the community, you'll definitely meet a few foul-mouthed infants online, but *MAG* has attracted a few mature gamers who are making efforts to aid newbies, and generate a feeling of camaraderie.

Even better, if you're lucky enough to gather eight friends, you'll instantly get a feel for *MAG*'s strengths and depths of combat.

"Hardcore clans will embrace the community features and dominate smaller matches"



Friend or foe? *MAG*'s persistent 'Shadow War' provides an interesting context for battles but never reaches its full potential. Some gamers are already passionately loyal.

Smooth operations Even in the biggest battles, the framerate holds up. The graphics are acceptable, but *MAG*'s appeal lies in the scale as opposed to the details.

Hardcore clans will embrace the community features and dominate smaller matches, but most people's early games will be spent running around lone-wolf, or bleeding out on the floor watching medics run past them as they try to get a grasp of the initially daunting mechanics.

The penalties for team killing are a bit too lenient too, presumably because during the chaos it's tough to avoid friendly-fire. During one game, where we were playing as a platoon commander, we called in a tactical bombardment (one of the perks of playing as a higher-ranking soldier) but because so many of our own players rushed blindly into the firing-zone we lost as much XP as we gained. +5 per enemy kill, -5 for each friendly casualty.

MAG is by no means a bad game. It's ambitious, cleverly designed, and it actually works when *256* players are trying to shoot each other's teeth out. But the early game lacks focus, and doesn't do enough to explain the complex mechanics to new players.

Without control and coordination, *MAG* turns into a scrappy mess. Perhaps if this was a £20, *Battlefield 1943* style PSN download we could live with the rough edges but it isn't. It's billed as a full-price blockbuster – and in that sense *MAG* fails to deliver. Certain types of gamers will see past its flaws and embrace the distinctive brand of warfare, but it's certainly not for everyone. **Andy Hartup**

In charge **At the start of each game, players who are of a high enough level can apply to be squad commander, platoon commander, or OIC (the one in charge of 128 player armies). The game assigns roles in the lobby.**

Fave Feature

PSM3 Verdict

***MAG* contains...**
Huge battles | Massive confusion
Some inspired touches | XP grinding

Overall Technically impressive but *MAG* is too scattershot to universally appeal.

73

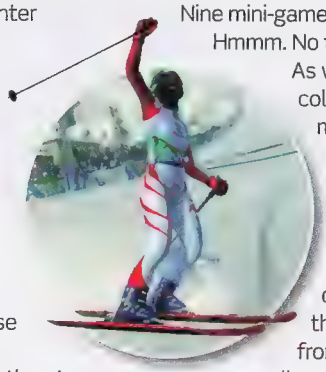
Cool runnings Two Man Bob is one of the most tedious events.

Sega | PS3 | Out now

Vancouver 2010

Hardly captures the Olympic spirit

You can usually rely on an Olympic tie-in game to stink up your console, and in this respect, *Vancouver 2010* doesn't disappoint. Capturing almost none of the excitement of the actual winter Olympics, this collection of snow-themed mini-games is a sterile mess.



Snow joke

Things start badly. You're offered the chance to choose your nationality, but beyond that there's absolutely nothing that lets you customise your experience. Come on guys – even a basic face-creation tool would have been better than shoving us into the skin-tight suits of Mr and Mrs Generic during every event. After nationality selection you're confronted with a list of seemingly random Olympic events. You can play through them in order, or randomly, but they all feel very separate; there's no sense that they all belong to the same competition. Oh, and – out of the 14 events – only about eight or nine are worth playing at all. Nine mini-games for £50?

Hmmm. No thanks, mate.

As with any collection of mini-games, *Vancouver* is more enjoyable when played with friends, but it's more a case of sharing the apathy. Aside from that, and the soulless single-player, there are a handful of challenges (reach a certain speed in the Two-Man Bobsleigh) to tackle and, er, that's it. **Andy Hartup**

PSM3 Verdict

A cynical, sterile attempt to flog cash out of Ski Sunday fans.

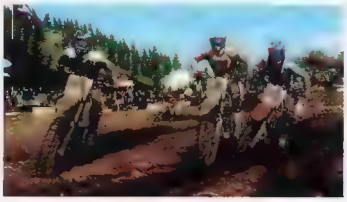
35

Powder play All the official logos and licenses are here, but none of the Olympic magic. For shame.

THQ | PS3 | Out Now

MX vs ATV Reflex

Dirty business or stuck in the mud?



Rainbow Studios' off-road motocross titles have done an admirable job over the years. But as is the way with a successful series, there's always the need to squeeze out the last few dollars and improve the formula in the process.

In some respects, *MX vs ATV Reflex* does exactly that. The deformable track surface add unpredictability to some of the more confined courses. The rider reflex ability (a quick-reaction controller movement that can prevent you from tumbling from your bike) keeps racing fast and flowing. Plus, the free-roam Waypoint races, *Motorstorm*-esque Omnicross events offer frantic, satisfying racing.

But the need to diversify hasn't been totally successful; most of the four-wheeled vehicles on offer feel limp and dull and act as padding more than a genuine addition. *Reflex* is another competent Motocross and Quad racer but misses out being the comprehensive off-road title it wants to be. **Andy Hartup**

74

Tecmo | PSP | Out now

Undead Knights

Brain dead in a good way

Undead Knights takes the brain dead hack and slashery of the *Dynasty Warriors* formula and adds in zombies for knockabout fun. Every felled enemy can be turned into a member of the undead and then turned to your advantage. A press of the right shoulder button will pile them on top of an enemy while you watch the flesh fly. Tossing zombies is used to bring down oversized executioners and armoured elephants. Need to cross a chasm? No problem. Just order your undead pals form a bridge for you.

Needless to say it's a lot of fun to be commanding corpses rather than running from them. However the same niggles that afflict other games of its type still apply. For instance, the camera is slower witted than your undead army and the constant jabbing of the attack button can be wearying. But the constant stream of soldiers, monsters and breakable scenery keeps the flies from settling. As does the inclusion of character upgrades and a slick multi-player mode. **Rory Smith**

79

EA | PS3 | Out now

Madden NFL Arcade

It's Madden without the flair

This is *Madden* stripped down: a 5-a-side tug-of-war where each player is given four plays to score a touchdown before a turnover, with the first to 30 points winning. The emphasis is on short, high tempo matches that should run like a highlights reel. Regretfully it's not as fun as it should be.

There are four options in attack: to run, or attempt a short, medium or long pass. Likewise with defence, you have four set-ups to counter each attacking style. The plays lack variation, and after playing a few games you'll have seen all the runs – don't expect to be doing a Miracle in Mississippi. There's also a notable lack of big hitting tackles. The game is at its best when power-ups are used – one electrifying play had three fumbles leading to a touchdown after using 'fumblitis'. These 13 power-ups add unpredictability to the otherwise uninspiring matches. **Sean O'Connor**

58

Activision | PS3 | Feb 19

Guitar Hero Van Halen

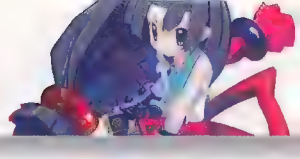
Casual fans need not apply...

There's been enough of these dedicated rhythym-action games to give devs an idea of what makes a good one. Here's our checklist: first, take a group with plenty of memorable hits that are fun to play on multiple plastic instruments. Then add a selection of tunes by bands that have been influenced by said hits. Thirdly, stuff the remainder of the disk with audio/visual memorabilia that'll delight fans.

Yes, Van Halen arguably tick the first box – Jump has a great, erm, keyboard riff, and the solos are some of the most spectacular-sounding ever tapped out on a guitar. But the bonus tracks? What the hell is Semi-Charmed Life by Third Eye Blind doing on there? And bonus materials? There's none to be seen. The shoddy character models don't even show off *Guitar H*'s trademark polish.

It gets worse – you don't get to play out Van Halen's rise to fame – instead just plod through the tracks unlocking stars. Fans will squeeze out some fun but this is the laziest *GH* yet. **PSM3**

40



Tecmo KOEI | PSP | Out now

Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days

Tactical RPG that's complex and comic

On the surface PS2 port/update *Disgaea 2* is ridiculous. Its characters include a Gallic frog with multiple personalities, a faded TV star with delusions of grandeur and Prinnys – the series' much loved exploding surf-penguins. Such knockabout silliness is an effective antidote for the collective angst of countless *Final Fantasy* games, but it doesn't make your team easy to like and the plot feels throwaway.

Not so the battle system. The endlessly complex tactical combat boasts more depth than most straight strategy titles, and the RPG elements mean you're constantly fine-tuning your squad and honing your techniques. It's dense and rewarding stuff.

Some will struggle with the isometric viewpoint, many more will be scared off by its complexity but its no less brilliant for its lack of compromise. Another stellar entry in the series then, but not one for newcomers. **Rory Smith**

85

Tecmo KOEI | PS3 | Out now

Last Rebellion

A matter of life and death

In Last Rebellion you play Nine and Aisha – two extravagantly dressed upstarts charged with restoring the life/death balance of their very brown fantasy kingdom. The twist is that they both share a single soul so only one of them can exist in the living realm at a time. Oh, cruel irony.

The combat system is clever. Borrowing from *Fallout 3* you target monsters' body parts and then switch places with your, er, soulmate to target recently tagged limbs with magic attacks. It's a nice twist on the otherwise over familiar turn based battle system.

It's a pity then that the game's story is so clichéd and its delivery so indifferent. In the opening scenes Nine's father is murdered by his brother. Our hero's reaction? A shrug of the shoulders and a pithy put down delivered in a bored American drawl. One for Japanese RPG nuts who find the *Final Fantasy* series too self-involved (and after *XIII*, who can really blame them) and gaming curio collectors. **Rory Smith**

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PSM3 Awards

The highs (and lows) of this month's reviews

The "tasteful nudity" award goes to... Heavy Rain. Well, it would do if we hadn't hijacked the camera via the debug menu and gone for a peep of Madison's terrifyingly detailed lady-bits in the shower scene.

The epic cut-scene award goes to...

Final Fantasy XIII

Thought *Metal Gear Solid 4* was too long-winded and dominated by exposition? Square have rammed 25 hours of hammy, beautiful, cut-scenes into *FFXIII* making it more movie than game. Pretty, but not what we wanted.

The never heard of it award goes to...

Last Rebellion

Not only were we not expecting this super-super-niche JRPG to turn up for review, no-one on the team had even heard of it before it landed in our post-hole. Despite its obscurity, though, *Last Rebellion* is above average.

Hi-Score Table

Heavy Rain	p80 88%
Disgaea 2	p89 85%
Dante's Inferno	p74 80%
Undead Knights	p88 79%
MX vs ATV Reflex	p88 74%
MAG	p84 73%
Final FantasyXIII	p66 70%
Silent Hill SM	p78 65%
Last Rebellion	p89 61%
Madden NFL Arcade	p88 58%
Guitar Hero Van Halen	p88 40%
Vancouver 2010	p88 35%

PSM3 Recommends

The best games from the last few months

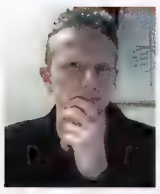
BioShock 2
2K Games | PS3
"A lovingly crafted, carefully constructed masterpiece of narrative richness and smart game mechanics. As such it even tops the original in terms of story telling and combat."
PSM3 Rating 93% - Issue 123

Bayonetta
Sega | PS3
"The boldest, most explosive and downright unashamed game we've played for years. It isn't a whacky genre game – it actually defines the genre it sits in. Seriously sexy stuff."
PSM3 Rating 90% - Issue 122

Braid
Hothead | PSN
"One of the most imaginative download-only games ever created, *Braid* proves continually inventive, perplexing, beautiful and clever. A true classic."
PSM3 Rating 92% - Issue 123

"I was piecing together secrets of a monstrous plan too vast to comprehend"

Assassin's Creed 2 is one of the most ambitious, confusing games ever. Join us, as we debate its shock legacy...



If only more games were like *Assassin's Creed 2*. It's one of the most impeccably developed and technically accomplished games of the generation. Sure, that undoubtedly has something to do with the vast development team and the already impressive game engine created for the original, but *Assassin's Creed 2* is far more than the sum of its parts. It is clearly something its creators have lavished love and painstaking attention to detail on, and – most importantly – this sequel has been crafted based on player feedback from the original game.

Spit and polish

The first *Assassin's Creed*, despite showing promise, had some big problems. Missions were repetitive, characters were instantly forgettable, and the plot made less sense than an episode of Lost muted and played at double speed. No-one really cared about Altair, or Desmond, and as for the settings – well, one sun-bleached, Crusade ruined city is pretty much the same as all the others. Ubisoft Montreal sat down, examined the problems and dealt with them. And did it with style.

The end result is what could be described

as the perfect sequel. Don't misunderstand – I'm not saying *Assassin's Creed 2* is a perfect game – but in terms of the way it played to the series' strengths and improved on everything players disliked about the original, it can be considered an ideal follow up. I can't remember any other series that has made such a radical leap from part one to two in such a short space of time. What was a decent platform adventure is now a must buy, and all in the space of two years.

Whereas, near the end of the first *Assassin's Creed*, I found myself grinding out the missions to reach the end, I now want to spend time in renaissance Italy. Each city has its distinct districts, its cast of memorable characters, and unique feel – it's a world you want to stay in long after literally fighting your way through the end credits. However, and I'm aware this is going to sound contradictory, I think Ubisoft's decision to have Ezio as the hero of the next game, due this year/early next year, is a mistake.

Rags to riches

A large part of *Assassin's Creed 2*'s greatness comes from the journey you share with Ezio. You see him struggle when his family is brutally executed. You see him make friends with Leonardo, fall in with courtesans, avenge the death of his family, and eventually topple the corrupt regime that has cast its shadow over his life. The developers deliberately drip-feed you abilities and perks to make the player feel like they are sharing Ezio's deadly education.

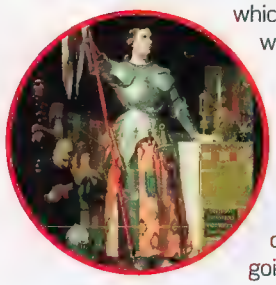
We've been through Ezio's journey. It's a sad moment at the end when you realise he has just been a tool all along to allow Desmond to access 'the prophecy', but it does make sense. Ezio's time is over. The series needs to move on. We need a new hero, a fresh world, and a different scenario. We need an *Assassin's Creed 3*, not *2.5*. Ubisoft have been guilty of pushing games too far before (*Rainbow Six* and *Ghost Recon*), and while that works for some series that rely on action over plot, like *COD*, it won't fly for such a rich, narrative-lead series as *Assassin's*.

If *Assassin's Creed* is to keep its momentum and maintain its fan-base it needs to do exactly what it did before: carefully consider its next move and take a leap forward, blazing a trail for less imaginative games to follow. It's what I loved about the sequel, and it's what we're hoping for when it comes to the third game. **Andy Hartup**

Andy Hartup is Associate Editor of PSM3. Favourite *AC* moment? Killing during Venice's Carnevale.

"With riddles solved and DLC complete, *Assassin's Creed II* just kept on giving"

When everybody was walking around Abstergo at the end of *Assassin's Creed* and wondering what the hell all the cryptic red writing was about, I was the guy with a pen and pad, fervently researching the Philadelphia project and scribbling down ideas to be fact-checked later. It captured my imagination like no other game has ever done: I felt like Casaubon from Foucault's Pendulum, piecing together the secrets of a monstrous plan too vast to comprehend. I was stunned that such a complex tale could be hidden inside the unlikeliest of sources, and to this day it's part of the reason why I'm one of *Assassin's Creed*'s biggest advocates (the other one being the meticulously crafted world).



Grey cell workout

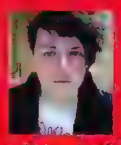
I enjoy games that make me think. I don't want to have to buy a copy of *Dr Kawashima's Brain Training* to exercise my mind, so while I love many things about *Assassin's Creed II*, it's the refusal to lower itself to the common denominator which pleases me most. The introduction of the 20 Glyphs neatly opened up the overarching storyline to more gamers with some rudimentary puzzles, yet these Glyphs were also vessels for more testing brainteasers in the form of coded messages that are inconsequential to the game's completion but vital for the bigger picture, that kept those of us who enjoyed solving the first game's closing enigmas busy for hours after the game had been switched off – unheard of in other action titles.

Fiction for fans

And then, with riddles solved and DLC complete, *Assassin's Creed II* kept on giving. Knowing that the tale resonates with so many fans, Ubisoft commissioned the novel and the Lineage movie, the latter of which has convinced me it's the only way in which games should be stepping into films (I'd like to thank the seemingly endless succession of terrible Hollywood game tie-ins for helping me reach that conclusion). I'm not going to pretend the time I spent investigating the subtleties of the plot were as enjoyable as the time I spent in Ezio's shoes, but that the franchise kept me entertained for so many hours is truly exceptional.

Matt Pellett writes for *Xbox World 360*. Favourite *AC* moment? Uncovering the truth.

"It's one of the most beautiful open world games on PS3"



Those early scenes as young Ezio are what sold this game to me. Unlike most people I've talked to, I loved the slow pace of the prologue scenes. Exploring Florence, getting used to the setting and characters, scampering over rooftops by moonlight, getting into trouble. Ubisoft did a wonderful job of getting you used to this character's life and the people around him, before throwing his whole world into turmoil when his parents and brother are hanged.

World of opportunity

Then when you finally leave the walls of the city and venture into the Tuscan countryside, it really felt like the beginning of an adventure. What the engine lacks technically, it more than makes up for in style. It's one of the most beautiful open world games on PS3, especially when you see one of the cities looming on the horizon.

I hated the first game, but somehow, Ubisoft sold me on this from the start. I even enjoyed the storyline, which I found unbearably po-faced in the original. The mythology is fascinating, and Ezio's tale of fiery vengeance was thrilling. The game is maybe a few hours too long, but the negatives stop there.

Andy Kelly

"We wanted to depict the darker side of the Renaissance in AC2"

Members of the dev team reflect on creating Ezio, the epic setting, and the surprising appearance of a giant squid...

PSM3 We love Ezio as a character – he's much more likeable than Altair. Is he inspired by anyone in particular?
Mohamed Gambouz (Art Director): Our main inspiration was of course Altair. From there, we got a lot of inspiration from paintings and sculptures from the period as well as movies which are set during the Renaissance like : Marcant de Venice, Elizabeth – The Golden Age, (which won an Oscar for its costumes) or TV series, like The Tudors. We also took a few inspirations from other video game characters such as Dante from *Devil May Cry*.

Since we essentially kept the main visual characteristics of Altair, the best way to make the change from the mediaval look to the Renaissance look was to put more refinement and richness to the cloth and ornaments he wore. We also added more elegance to his silhouette. Since Ezio is from a noble family, these changes in his design work very well with who he is.

Corey May (Scriptwriter): In terms of inspiration for the personality of Ezio, we like to refer to the count of Monte Cristo... but there are many others!

PSM3 Was renaissance Italy always the plan for the sequel?
Sebastien Puel (Producer): When we created the *AC* franchise, we knew we wanted to talk about pivotal periods in History. Moments where key changes define the world in which we live. That was exactly the case for the Third Crusade: this period defined the balance of power between civilisation and religion for the centuries to come.

When we started *AC2*, we asked ourselves the question.: what is an even more exciting, defining moment in History? The answer was pretty easy to find: in a few years and in a very precise place, a handful of genius' radically changed *everything*; they invented a modern vision of the world, where men were at the centre rather than God. They invented a new way of representing the world (the invention of perspective), they changed politics, created the art of modern war and diplomacy. One man even invented planes, helicopter and tanks! Those men were Machiavelli, Leonardo Da Vinci and the Medici to name a few. The place is Italy. The time is the end of the 15th century and it is called Renaissance.

But those were also cruel times, ruled by war, treason and murder! We found it very interesting to depict this darker side of the Renaissance in an *Assassin's Creed* game and cast a new light on those astonishing events.

PSM3 You had a big team working on *AC2*, how did you co-ordinate it all?
Patrick Plourde (Lead Game Designer): Montreal took care of what we call the 'core' game: AI, Fight, Missions, Behaviours, etc. Our job was also to provide support to the 'outsource' teams. Singapore took care of the Secret Locations. Annecy took care of the Auditore Villa. As for how we manage to keep track of all this, well it was a challenge (mind boggling would be appropriate) but to sum things up, we had a team of people dedicated into communicating regularly to make sure all teams would be on the same page.

PSM3 The Giant Squid in Venice is a nice little Easter Egg. What was the thinking behind that?
Patrick Plourde: This was a little surprise for us too! The Singapore team put this Easter Egg in the game.

"I dislike something about its overwrought, willfully complex plot and beard-twiddling"

I know *Assassin's Creed 2* is good, and I'd probably begrudgingly respect it or – heaven forbid – actually like it if I could sweat my way through the first few hours, but the truth is: I irrationally dislike *Assassin's Creed 2*. It's something about its pompous, overwrought, willfully complex plot and beard-twiddling 'hey, I'm different' historical setting: the sincere delivery of its absurdity just makes me cringe. And that's coming from someone who adores Lost (time travelling survivors on mystery island play pawns in biblical good versus evil conflict), David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas (Six tales spanning an 1850 sea voyage, to artificially intelligent food clone Somni 451, to a post-apocalypse caveman distant future) and, er, *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude* (priapic man-boy with comically large face sinks to deplorable, self-ridiculing lows to fool damaged women into bed).

The fourth Wallace

It's the intense, groomed man at a house party aggressively playing the harmonica and talking loudly about his travels to young girls, who don't know better, in the kitchen. The very fact it pretends not to be a game by explaining the presence of flashing in-game furniture and 'reality shattering' prompts, since you're sat in the Animus (a shit version of the Matrix controlled by Danny Wallace), is so conceited, it hurts. A game *within* a game – wow, take that Kojima. It's boring too. Running around a confusing maze of a city, delivering letters for angry Italian stereotypes, holding R1 to magically clamber over buildings, like driving a kind of human car. Oh, look, a box with curtains... they'll never find me here. Six hundred magic beans for a new sash on my tunic? Great. I know it's no more preposterous than most games, but the fact it *thinks* it's important, worthy and meaningful – with little of the playful, nudge-wink, humour of Kojima – really rankles. And, to be completely, glib – who wants to play a game without guns? Oh look, I've stabbed a man playing a lute with a poisoned blade and now he's wobbling like a twat. Hardly wish fulfilment, is it? Before you write in, I *know* I'm wrong, but in my time-poor life, I'd rather spend my few spare hours playing a game I instantly enjoy, rather than forcing myself to be interested in a game that feels vaguely overwhelming, confusing and, well, *French*. Who's with me? Eh? EH? Oh, suit yourselves.

Daniel Dawkins is Editor of PSM3. Least favourite AC moment? Pretty much all of it.

Five things you may have missed in Assassin's Creed 2

From bloody DLC, to a twisted family legacy... here's the hidden depths of the *Assassin's Creed* universe

1 The Giant Squid

Head over to the Assassin's Tomb at Santa Maria del Vistazione in Venice, and make your way through the first half of the tomb. When you come to the circular water chamber pull the lever, and head to the water's edge. Peer down into the murky depths and after a minute you'll see a giant squid swim past. Spooky. This is a sly nod to the fact that the first giant squid to be captured alive was bagged off the coast of north eastern Italy during the game's development in 2007.

2 Auditore Family Tomb

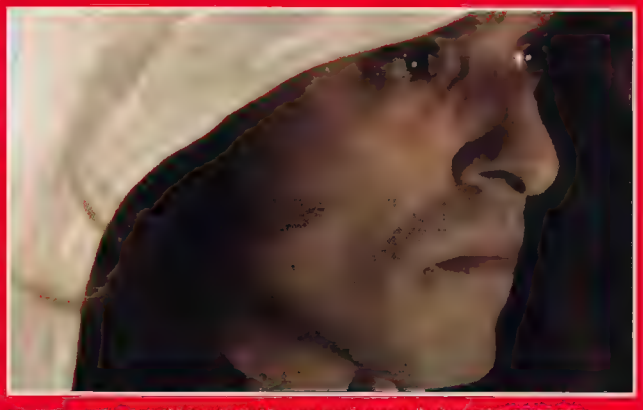
Want to know the history of Ezio's family? This tomb, which appears in Monteriggioni after you purchase it using Uplay points (press △ on the main menu), tells you all about how the Auditore's rose to nobility and became assassins. We won't spoil it for you here, but we can tell you Marco Polo is involved, and that the Auditores aren't all they seem to be. As well as the story, there's also a neat tomb to tackle too.

3 The Battle of Forli and Bonfire of the Vanities DLC

By now, the *Battle of Forli* DLC will already be on PSN. We had a chance to play through this action heavy chapter (it slots into the main story at Memory Sequence 12) and can confirm it is great value at £3.19. It centres on the story of Katarina Sforza, who helps Ezio protect the 'apple' Piece of Eden from the Orsi brothers, who have been hired to collect it by *AC2*'s nefarious villain, the Spaniard. The second bit of DLC, *Bonfire of the Vanities*, is due at the end of February.

4 Lineage

Ezio comes from a long line of Assassins, including his father. Lineage is a live action series of shorts, starring the voice actors from the game, which fills in the events leading up to the moment Desmond first syncs with Ezio. We know what you're thinking - it really isn't as bad as it sounds. You get to see the Duke of Milan's assassination (hinted at in the game) and discover the reasons the Pazzi want the Auditores out of Florence.



Simon Says: The near-thirty minute Lineage movie was on last month's PSM3 DVD.

Catch all the episodes now on YouTube.

5 Bloodlines weapons

You there: PSP owner. Did you know that if you played the above average (sorry) *Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines* on PSP you can sync your save and unlock bonus weapons in your PS3 game? Beating one of the game's bosses in *Bloodlines* will unlock a special weapon in *AC2*, which appears in your villa. Finish the PSP version to nab all six weapons in the PS3 adventure. Handy that.

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Extended Play

Playstation Longer | Harder | Deeper

Extended Play section

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Controversial POP: Warrior Within revisited

Plus MORE

TOP TEN

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POP: Warrior Within
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110 CULTURE
Delicious video game cakes. Mmmm
Celebrating the wider world of Playstation culture and its army of dedicated, often mental, fans.

Any thoughts about what you'd like to see in Extended Play? Mail them to psm3@futurenet.com, Tweet us at twitter.com/psm3_magazine or post on the forum @ psm3mag.com

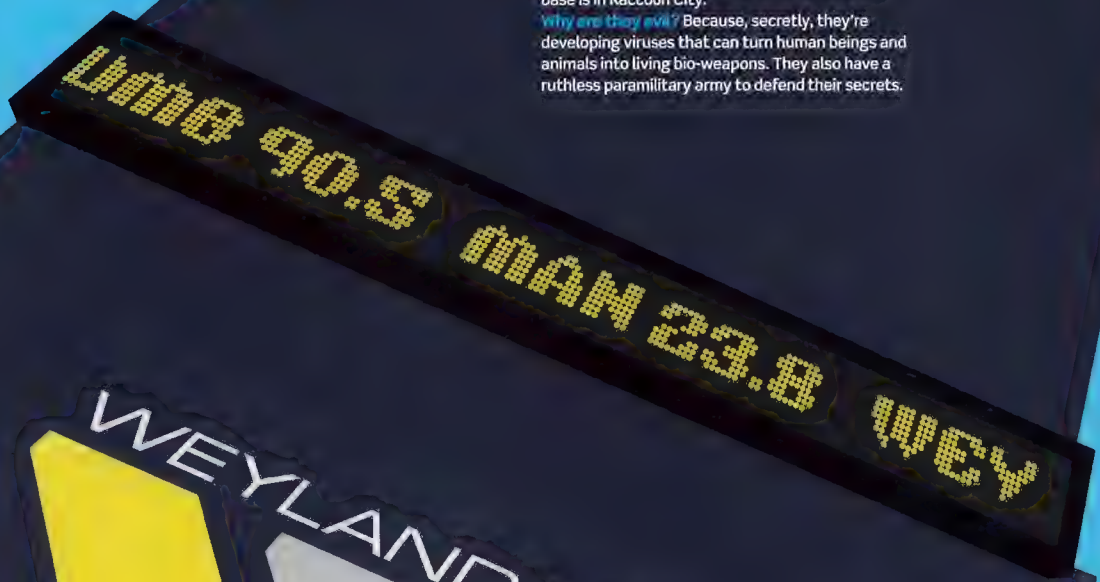
HISTORY

UMBRELLA CORPORATION

As featured in *Resident Evil*

Who are they? As far as the world is concerned, Umbrella are a pharmaceutical company. They're the biggest corporation in the *Resident Evil* universe, with offices in every corner of the globe, but their base is in Raccoon City.

Why are they evil? Because, secretly, they're developing viruses that can turn human beings and animals into living bio-weapons. They also have a ruthless paramilitary army to defend their secrets.



WEYLAND-YUTANI

As featured in *Aliens Vs Predator*

Who are they? In the Alien universe, these guys run *everything* – from deep space mining and colonisation, to manufacturing weapons for the military. Their founder is Charles Bishop Weyland, played by Lance Henriksen, who has appeared in every Alien film, and Sega's *AVP* game.

Why are they evil? They'll stop at nothing to make a profit. Rather than contain or destroy the Xenomorphs, the company wanted to secretly capture a live sample and develop it into a biological weapon. Of course, they're also interested in the Predators; specifically their advanced technology.

"*Fallout 3*'s vault system was originally code named Project Safehouse"

PlayStation's most evil corporations

Everyone hates The Man. The guys pulling the strings. The money men. So they're an obvious choice for a video game antagonist. There's nothing more evil than a profiteering business tycoon in a suit, rubbing his hands and cackling as he crushes yet another small business.

But video game corporations are much, much worse. They almost always have some ulterior motive, whether it's genetically engineering monsters or forming secret armies. Here are some of the worst offenders, whose stock prices shoot up as their health and safety records plummet.

SHINRA ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY

As featured in *Final Fantasy VII*

Who are they? Shinra provide electricity to all of Gaia, and act as its de facto government. Their enormous Mako reactors litter the landscape, and they're also involved in space exploration.

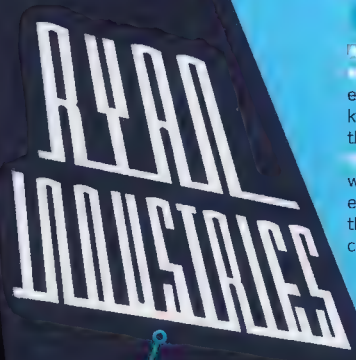
Why are they evil? As well as controlling the populace with fear, the Mako energy they're draining is slowly killing the planet. But profit is everything, and they don't care; using aggression to silence any opposition.

VAULT-TEC INDUSTRIES

As featured in *Fallout 3*

Who are they? With the war between China and America escalating, Vault-Tec built vast underground bunkers – known as Vaults – for concerned citizens to shelter from the devastation of nuclear war, should it break out.

Why are they evil? Rather than a public service, the Vaults were part of the Societal Preservation Program; a secret experiment to study the effects of isolation. They also used the Vaults to develop the Forced Evolutionary Virus and create an army of super soldiers.



RYAN INDUSTRIES

As featured in *BioShock*

Who are they? Founded by entrepreneur Andrew Ryan, this steel company made him the youngest billionaire in the world. He then used its considerable capital to build Rapture, an underwater city and haven for the world's greatest minds.

Why are they evil? The power went to Ryan's head, and he became a nefarious tyrant, monopolising industry in Rapture. He even started charging for oxygen and would aggressively suppress any attempts to question his rule.

VERSALIFE

As featured in *Deus Ex*

Who are they? Like Umbrella, VersaLife is a pharmaceutical company with a secret. In public they manufacture the only known cure for the Gray Death, a fatal, rapidly-spreading virus.

Why are they evil? The Gray Death was their creation. Working with Majestic 12, a secret organisation bent on ruling the world, the virus was developed as a way of controlling the populace and blackmailing governments.

MANTEL GLOBAL INDUSTRIES

As featured in *Haze*

Who are they? Part corporation, part private military company. Mantel are hired by governments to battle insurgents and rebels. They use a drug called Nectar to enhance the performance of their soldiers.

Why are they evil? They've actually been committing war atrocities like murder and torture. The reality has been disguised by the use of Nectar – the soldiers are merely Mantel's puppets.

10 Magic Moments in Bayonetta

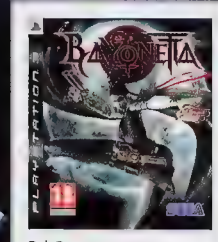
Richard Stanton

TEN REASONS

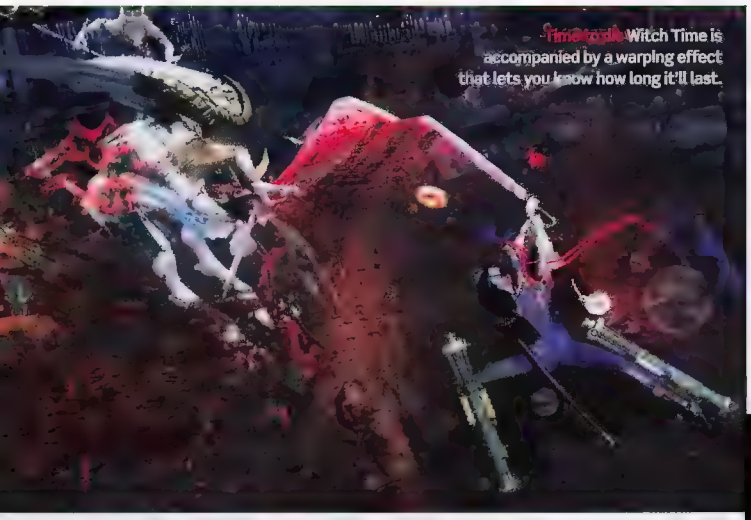
1 BAYONETTA

Brutal, ballsy Bayonetta. Tongue like a whip, enough power to punch God into the sun and an ass like two puppies in a sack. On her journey, she develops into the most fluid and ferocious fighting machine you'll ever control in gaming, capable of balletic artistry that shows how slow and weak everyone else is. A funny and mesmerising lead in a violent ballet.

Cat woman Bayonetta moves like a panther (literally) with her transformation moves.

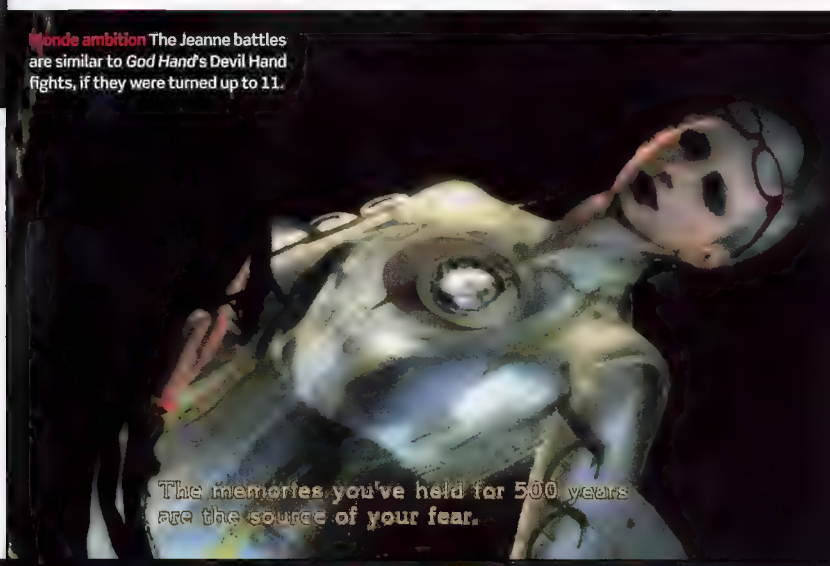


Pub Sega
Dev Platinum Games
FYI PS3 | 2010 | PSM122 90%
Bayonetta is the latest and greatest from Hideki Kamiya, the man behind *Devil May Cry*, *Viewtiful Joe*, *Okami* and *God Hand*. A mentalist vision of a witch with demonic hair taking on heaven's legions, it's a masterclass in intuitive combat mechanics and sensory cues


Time to slo Witch Time is accompanied by a warping effect that lets you know how long it'll last.

3 GENIUS JEANNE

The greatest opponent is always your double. In *Bayonetta* it's Jeanne, a Dante-coloured deadly opposite number who you fight four times in a series of escalating brilliance. You have to be at your best, and being at your best is what *Bayonetta*'s all about. The first battle is set 500 years ago and involves control of the Umbra throne, whereas in the present day you batter each other senseless on top of airships, rockets, collapsing buildings and while sprinting up walls. Every time Jeanne takes a beating it proves how amazing you are – what a friend.



Blonde ambition The Jeanne battles are similar to *God Hand*'s Devil Hand fights, if they were turned up to 11.

2 WITCH TIME

Where would a witch be without the odd magic trick? Eye-focusing light and chimes clue you in on the trajectory of every enemy's attack, and judging those correctly enables you to dodge at the last possible second and set up *Bayonetta*'s party piece. The screen warps and time slows for a few critical moments, meaning every fight's full of bite-sized pauses as you judge a swing and flip over the blade at the last second, steaming back into their sluggish body with your incredible combos.

Armless fun Bayonetta finishes off each boss with something gruesome from her follicles.

5 NA NA NA NA BATWOMAN!

The best way to avoid getting hit is to use your witchy powers to transform into a flock of bats. A move you get half way through, it takes care of moments when your timing's ever-so-slightly off. Hit Dodge as a blow lands and Bayonetta turns into loads of skittering rodents, reforming seconds later and activating Witch Time. A brilliantly cool life saver. Where's yours, Kratos?

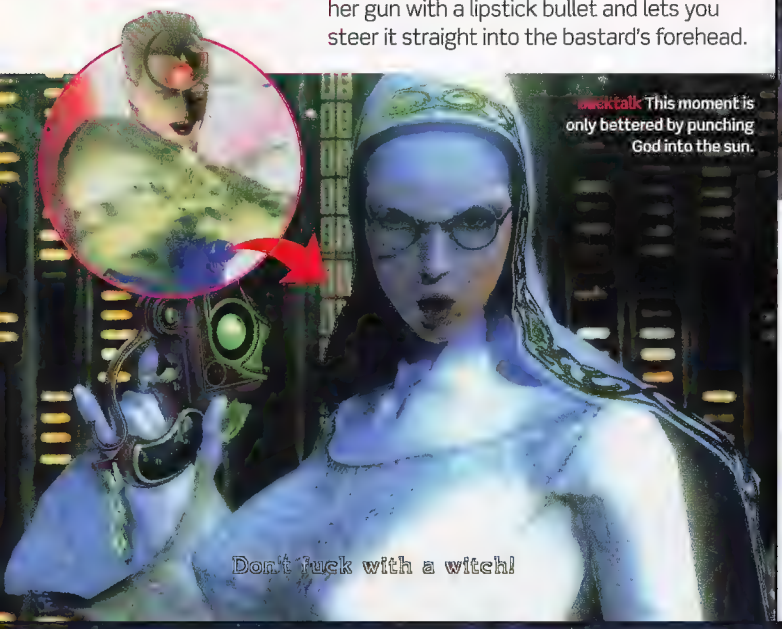
Animal instincts Bayonetta can also turn into a panther or a crow. Choices, choices...

4 RIPPING OFF A BOSS'S ARMS

The thing about bosses is that you rarely get to actually rip them to shreds. *Bayonetta* lets you literally tear them apart, piece by piece, throughout and after the battle. Our fave sees you tearing all the limbs off a floating behemoth, before summoning huge hands out of your hair that play volleyball with the boss's body before crushing it to a pulp. Even mid-level boss fights are epic, with one letting you pile-drive a giant snake before turning your hair into a bird to *eat it to death*.

6 DON'T F*CK WITH A WITCH

Penultimate boss, Balder isn't just evil – he combs his hair with a feather and wears a golden faceplate monocle. He's a cheap fighter too, calling on satellite death rays and killing several of your hair demons before refilling his health bar mid-scrap. Bayonetta not only kicks his ass, but then announces "Don't f*ck with a witch," loads her gun with a lipstick bullet and lets you steer it straight into the bastard's forehead.



Sweet talk This moment is only bettered by punching God into the sun.

Day tripper Parry just as Bayonetta is hit and she'll respond with a powerful attack of her own.

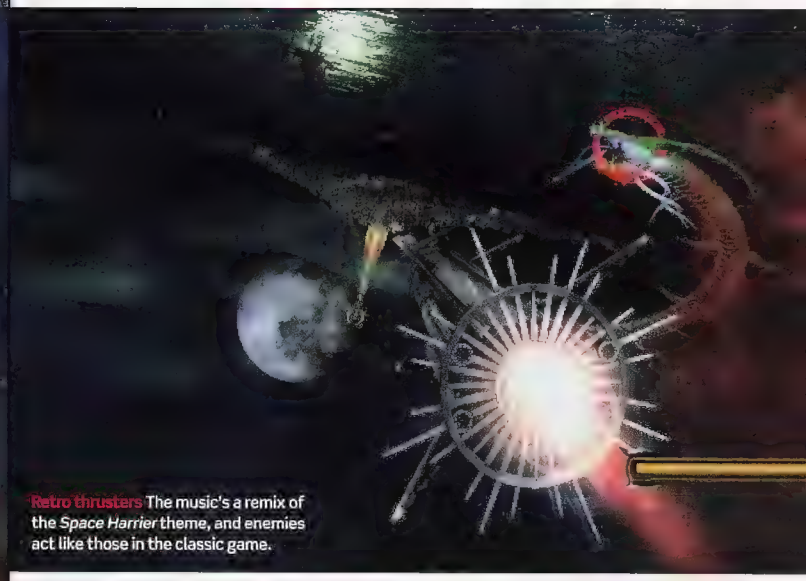
7 THE MAGIC OF A GOOD PARRY

We've no idea what 'The Moon Of Mahaa-Kalaa' means, but it's amazing. Buy it from Rodin, equip it, and you have a new defensive move in your arsenal – the parry. And unlike in cheaper fighters like *Devil May Cry*, the parry in *Bayonetta* is usable. It even adds a counter if you get the movement just right, making it (in our opinion) the best parry move ever. A real treat for your second playthrough.

Fight to win On Hard, *Bayonetta* becomes the best fighting game ever made, without a doubt.

8 HARD MODE & INFINITE CLIMAX

Bayonetta is better than everything ever because the first runthrough is a tutorial. When you restart on Hard with a tooled-up witch, it remixes the fights and throws the tough sods at you from the start. The split-second dodges and counters punctuate a new level of fluidity as you begin to glimpse the possibilities of this perfect combat system. And Infinite Climax with Witch Time disabled? Insanity.



Retro thrusters The music's a remix of the *Space Harrier* theme, and enemies act like those in the classic game.

9 GO, MUMMY!

If you've played *Space Harrier*, you know what this is all about. If you haven't, it's still fantastic. Seven minutes of spinning, blasting, braindead nonsense as Bayonetta rides a missile into the heart of the enemy base with her daughter on top, cheering her on. The entire menagerie of bad guys are transformed into shoot-'em-up staples trying to stop your bonkers progress, but you're not going to let them touch your daughter, right? Maternal instincts have never blown up so many bad guys.

10 TORTURING ENEMIES AS A NUN

In *Bayonetta*, you get to make anyone who dares to attack you squirm. Build up your magic meter, then conjure a chainsaw behind your back and cut your foes in half, crush them in a giant pair of hands, or just dropkick them straight into an iron maiden. Oh, and you can do it all dressed as a nun. Is that so wrong?

Kick the habit There are plenty of other alternate costumes for Bayonetta, but there's something hot about nuns with glasses.

The ones we didn't pick...

The amazing soundtrack
It's hard to say why remixes of 'Fly Me To The Moon', a pile of classic Sega themes and fresh pop make the best beat-em-up background you could wish for, but they do.

The in-jokes
It's crammed with them, from *Dragon Ball Z* to *Resident Evil 4* and back by way of *Halo* and *Assassin's Creed*. They're a good laugh, but there are so many other amazing things in here that they just miss out.

Angel attack!
A mini-game where you shoot angels in the head to bag points for prizes. It's simple but fun.

EMAIL PSM3 @
Disagree with our choice? Then send us your picks psm3@futurenet.com

WALL OF SHOTS

25 incredible weapons in Borderlands

Andy Hartup

GUN SHOW 25 ways to bust heads

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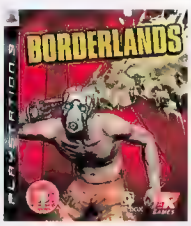
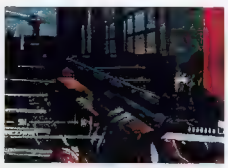


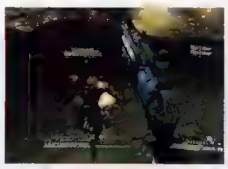
Pub 2K Games
Dev Gearbox
FYI PS3 | 2009 | PSM120 84%
FPS meets RPG in this *Fallout*-a-like wasteland shooter. The big thing with Borderlands is the online co-op that sees you and three mates hunting big, big enemies and the random weapon system that ensures everyone loots unique items from kills and crates. Nice

Borderlands features a random weapon generation feature which creates a near infinite amount of guns for you to collect. These are the best weapons we picked up during one playthrough. You'll end up with your own personal collection on your trek through Pandora... good luck.

Shoot... LB7 Caustic Wrath
A decent 'softening' sniper to have in your backpack, this corrosive sniper is handy for weakening enemies before a full-scale skirmish. Use your scope wisely and combine it with a shock weapon for maximum effect.

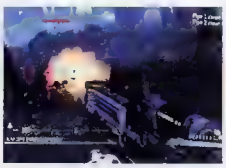


Shoot... ZX11 Hunter's Striker
A man's shotty, this non-elemental weapon packs a real punch with +30 Critical Hit damage and +50% accuracy on top of already beefy stats. Ideal for anyone around level 25-30 looking to get stuck in.



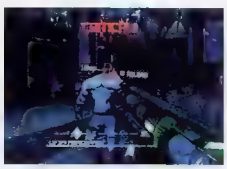
Shoot... Madjack
Don't let the weak damage fool you – this revolver has a decent zoom and a chance of inflicting explosive damage. You can get multiple Madjacks by killing its respawning owner, One-Eyed Jack, in the Firepower: Market Correction mission.

Shoot... The Roaster
Clue's in the name here folks – this rocket launcher, complete with a nifty zoom, will ignite any enemy it's fired at and they'll burn for ages. Pity it's let down by a small, two-shot magazine. Still, a good choice of weapon for dedicated Brick players.



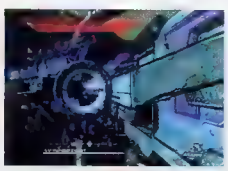
Shoot... TD430D Desert SMG
This deceptively mean SMG may seem tame with a damage of 51, but it has a great rate of fire, lowered recoil and oh yeah, highly-explosive bullets. Combine with a decent Mercenary Mod for best effect.

Shoot... HX-A Malevolent Thumper
Sometimes you don't need fancy elemental effects to bring the hurt. This SMG has +98% damage and +52% reload speed for hasty take-downs. An ideal primary weapon for Soldier and Hunter classes.

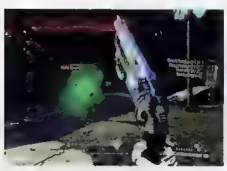


Shoot... SG15 Hunter's Shotgun
Another power weapon, this shotgun packs a tidy 115 damage with a x9 multiplier and critical hit modifier. Sadly, it's let down by having a small two-shot mag and a lengthy reload time. Good for second winds though.

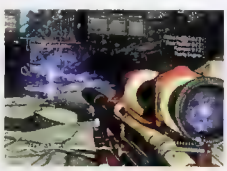
Shoot... HVY40 Incendiary Machine Gun
Does what it says on the tin (so to speak). If the bullets don't drop your enemies, the fact it will also set them on fire, will. Shame it only has a x2 elemental damage and a relatively small mag, but one to look out for.



Shoot... RPG21 Static Rocket Launcher
We claimed this in the final round of the Rust Commons West arena battle. It packs a punch, can remove shields from whole groups of enemies, and causes lasting shock damage. A good all-rounder.

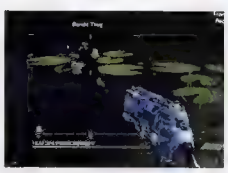


Shoot... RV10 Pestilent Defiler
The description for this powerful revolver is simply 'Give sick'. And that's what it does, with a high chance of corroding enemies with every shot, and the added bonus of that damage spreading. Nice.



Shoot... PPZ 7.2 Liquid Orion Sniper
Not so hot in terms of actual damage, but this elemental sniper rifle is great at causing shock damage and has a 15 bullet mag so you rarely have to reload. Ideal for Sniper-speced Hunters to soften up the enemy.

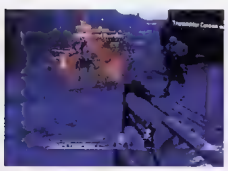
Shoot... DEF11-A Incendiary Defender
A powerful and rare shotgun that sets enemies on fire for ages, and regenerates ammo at an alarming rate. Once you've bought/found this man-roasting piece of kit you may never need another weapon.



Shoot... RV10 White Law
A simple pistol that packs a massive punch. This is the thing that makes bad-guys literally explode into clouds of chunks. Messy, but loses its sting as you approach the late 20 levels. Keep an eye out for an upgrade...

Shoot... VRR550 Burning Sniper
Fancy a break from zapping and corroding enemies from afar? This is the sniper for you. Has a 150% bonus for critical hits (perfect for the Hunter class) and a 3x elemental fire damage effect. Toasty.

Shoot... HVY29 Shattering Mauler
Shattering is the right word. This heavy machine gun may not have fancy elemental effects, but with a 128% damage bonus on top of already healthy (or should that be unhealthy) stats, it's brutal.



Shoot... SPR11 Terrible Carnage
This is a shotgun that shoots rockets. You heard that right, rockets. Each shot has a massive +426% damage, and the rate of fire you can blast them off at isn't too shabby either. A fantastic party piece.

Shoot... 110011 Wave Blaster
The very first Eridian weapon you find, this has reasonable damage, reasonable accuracy, reasonable fire rate. Why is it special? Because it has infinite ammo and makes you feel like a futuristic badass.

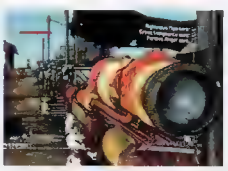
Shoot... MAL31 Savage Law
A solid mid-level pistol with just about everything pimped. Has zoom, recoil, damage, and fire rate boosts. Ideal if you haven't gone down an elemental development route and need a quick, reliable shooter.

Shoot... DVLXX Fearsome Thunder
The most powerful sniper rifle we found. This has a basic damage of 586, and if that doesn't take down your target, there's an added bonus of 150% for critical hits. It's basically a monster in the right hands.

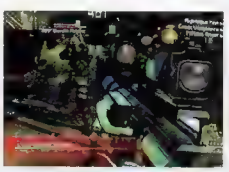
Shoot... TD230 B Lightning SMG
Won't win any prizes for stopping power, but if you need to electrocute large groups of enemies and keep your distance to avoid having your ass handed back to you, this is the weapon for you.

Shoot... RPG10 Caustic Rocket Launcher
This RPG is a serious bit of kit. Weighing in with a hefty 529 basic damage, it also has a high chance of melting the face off anything you fire it at. The drawback? It only fires one rocket in a clip... make it count.

Shoot... SG10 Vitriolic Crux
Not overly powerful or accurate, but causes massive corrosion damage. You can kill most things by taking one shot then sitting back as they burn – providing you actually connect in the first place.



Shoot... GGN20XX Solid Gamble
Another weapon with a very apt name. Not a flashy sniper, but it will pop heads like over-ripe melons if you manage to zero in with a critical hit. You'll even get an extra 200% damage for your troubles.



Shoot... Boom Stick
We claimed this after besting Baron Flynt inside his Thor fortress. A six-shot shotgun, this causes huge damage, inflicts corrosion after a critical hit, and fires all-six shots in one burst. Hardcore, and perfect for fans of melting things.

Shoot... 101011 Cannon
Another fancy-pants Eridian weapon, this slow-firing rifle will kick out an orb of energy that inflicts a whopping 886 damage per hit, and – as a final insult to the injury – cause sustained shock damage. Alien-chic.

Borderlands FAQ

Q How do I increase the space in my backpack?
A Every time you complete an optional Claptrap rescue mission you'll get a backpack SDU that increases your inventory by three slots. If you're desperate for even more space after collecting all ten, grab the DLC for some bonus ones. You'll need to activate them in your inventory.

Q I regret some of my early skill tree choices. Can I start over?
A It's cheap and easy to respec. Got to the nearest New-U station and select "Reset Skill Points." It's worth experimenting with different styles of play and character specialisations.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS Things to do in Pandora

There's no shortage of weapons to shoot or weapons to loot in Pandora, but your options aren't just limited to grinding and head-popping. Here's our favourites of the extra-curricular activities on offer in the dusty wasteland...

Repeat... Playthroughs
Instead of letting you play past the end credits, *Borderlands* lets you start a new playthrough where you keep all your weapons, and enemies start at level 30. Ideal for anyone looking to reach level 50.

Find... Clap Traps
There are ten Clap Traps hidden throughout Pandora. Listen out for their yelps and make rescuing them a priority whenever you see one. It's worth it for the extra backpack space (see FAQ over the page).

Participate... Arena battles
Head to an Arena (there's one in Rust Commons West) for an organised tournament or just melee attack a team-mate for an impromptu duel if you're sick of being friends.

Discover... Secret crates
There's plenty about. When you reach 'Another Piece of the Puzzle', fast-travel back to New Haven and go behind the building ahead of the New You station to grab it for an easy one.

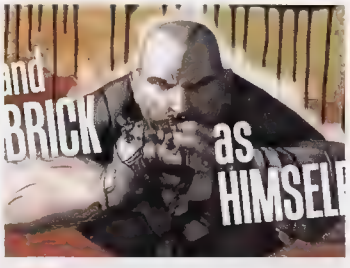
Complete... Bounty Missions
Make sure you tackle all the Bounty Board missions you can. Not only do they give you plenty of XP for levelling up, they can also spit out some tasty random loot.

CHOOSE YOUR DESTINY Character set-ups

Soldier For tactical players, there's no better class. Cheap respecs allow you to change from medic to ammunition dispenser to turret wielding powerhouse depending on the session. Not great for soloing, but invaluable in a group.

Siren Phasewalk is the Siren's best friend. Beef up either the Elemental tree or the Assassin tree to max out Phasewalk and add extra bullet damage and fire rate to regular attacks. Radiance and Phase Strike are priorities.

Hunter Although an upgraded Bloodwing can be handy, you're better off focusing on either the Sniper or Gunslinger trees. Riotous Remedy and Gun Crazy are good to go big on, as is Smirk if you're playing co-op.

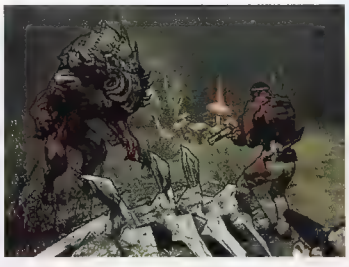


Berserker Like punching stuff? Fill out the brawler skill tree and equip a class mod – you'll end up with lethal, potentially explosive fists. Alternatively, spend your points on the Blaster tree to launch ultra-powerful rockets.

PLAYING TOGETHER Co-op tricks

Healing rockets If you're a Hunter or Siren class you can support more heavily armed mates in firefights by peppering the battle zone with healing rockets that damage enemies and replenish friendly health-bars.

Ammo turrets If your Soldier has a fully upgraded Support tree, he can lay down Scorpio turrets that kick out ammo drops. Get your Hunter to sit behind the shield, hoover up the drops and support the team with grenades .



Scout ahead A fully upgraded Elemental Siren will have a lengthy Phasewalk and will cause permanent shock damage by brushing past enemies. Use her to scout out areas and soften up the resistance early.

Use bodies as cover If your Brick is down in the middle of a tasty firefight don't forget you can actually hide behind his kneeling body and use it as cover while you execute a hasty heal. Less effective with smaller characters...

EXTRA LOOT Other essential kit

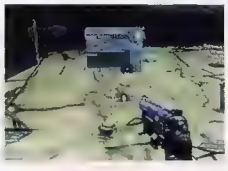
It's not all about the guns. OK, it's *mostly* about the guns, but there's also more subtle methods to customise your character. Don't forget that you can pick up mods for your friend's characters too, even if they're playing a different class.

Use... Class Mod
The best way to employ Class Mods early on is to use weapon-skill enhancers, but as you level up, Mods that beef up your character abilities become can dramatically change the game, especially in the later stages.

Use... Grenades
This really depends on how you play, but our favourite were the Transfusion grenades that leech health from enemies. You don't even need to aim them. Shock Rain grenades are pretty effective too.

Use... Elements
It's an easy one to miss, but make sure you always have an Element attached to your character's special ability. Our best combos: explosive Berserk and incendiary Phasewalk, for obvious reasons.

Use... Vehicle
The best way to kill most wildlife is to crush it under a solid vehicle. Later on vehicle weapons get weaker, but the squash always kills. It's not the best way to level up though – you'll earn a lot more XP if you stay on foot.



Use... Shield
Well duh. We experimented with all kinds of shields, but the best results always come from ones with a high recharge rate and protection. If you've got a dedicated healer in your squad, just concentrate on the latter.

COMMON ENEMIES Pandora's deadliest creatures

Like any good RPG, *Borderlands* begins with you shooting a standard pistol at soft monsters that die in a few hits. At the end of your adventure you'll be launching rockets at massive beasts that take a hell of a beating and dish out *loads* of XP.

Kill... Skags
By the time you leave Fryestone, you'll be sick of these savage, dog-like creatures. Get some bullets down their gaping gullets for a critical hit. Finish one off by jumping on its head and you'll get an amusing Trophy.

Kill... Rakk
More irritating than genuinely dangerous, these are best dealt with via a long-distance snipe, or as a group with a close shotgun blast. You'll get a Trophy if you manage to kill five of them in ten seconds.

Kill... Spiderants
Can be a pain when they attack as a group. Elemental SMGs and shotguns are the best way to dispatch them. Use Roland's turret or some co-ordinated teammates to score crits by hitting their abdomens.

Kill... Bandits
Bandits are best picked off with either corrosive or shock charged sniper bullets, but if they get close, bust out the SMG or character abilities. Headshots (predictably) are the way to score critical hits.

Kill... Guardians
These blue-bastards have heavy shields and weak bodies, so hammer them with shock weapons and finish them with either an SMG or full machine gun. You'll score crits by hitting them in the chest.

DEFINING MOMENT

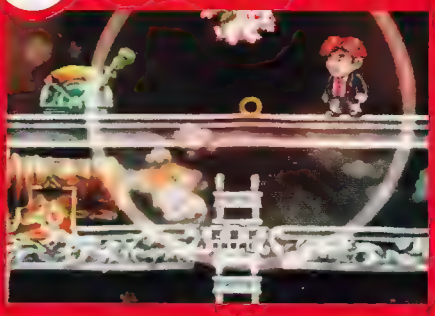
Grabbing the secret Elevator Action star in Braid

Twinkle twinkle

It's possible to complete *Braid* without even realising they exist, but spend enough time trying to break out of the levels and you might, if you're lucky, stumble onto one of the eight secret stars. Finding them isn't even half the problem: just try collecting them. One will make you restart the game. Another forces you to leave the controller untouched for almost two hours. The final star is attainable only if you're able to conjure up a time paradox. But the most ingenious puzzle of them all – the cleverest enigma in any PlayStation 3 game, even – involves Elevator Action and its monumental set-up. Solve it and you deserve a place in Mensa's halls.

"It's possible to complete Braid without even realising they exist"

1 The rabbit



Bunny suicides The solution to the star puzzle begins by coaxing the killer bunny to the top of the lift, dropping the slow-mo ring and goading the rabbit into repeatedly leaping over your head. Then send the ring down with the lift to slow the cannon fuses and escape the dead end.

2 The ladder

Another level Move to the second part of the level with the ring. With cunning use of the ring, you'll be able to move the sparkling platform to the left. Use the top lever to release the tall ladder, charge Tim with time-invariant dust and jump onto the ladder as you rewind its position.

3 The pay-off

Helping hand Remember the bunny hops from earlier? Use the sparkling platform up here to rewind back to those rabbit leaps. Time your bounce to land on the rabbit at the apex of its jump but be careful not to rewind too far – you could accidentally erase the hops all together.

PlayStation's best kept secrets revealed every month

Bonus action › **Brutal Legend** › Sweet Ophelia

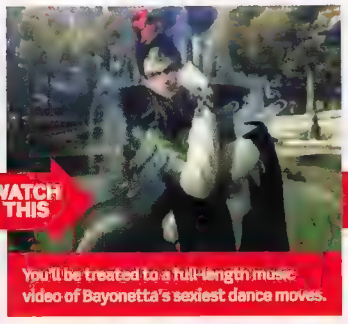
In the final cut-scene, you'll see Ophelia sitting near the cross on top of the hill.

Having completed the game, you're free to explore. Go find Ophelia on the hill.

You have the option to make out with her for all eternity. One way to pass the time.

Sexy dancing › **Bayonetta** › Strictly witch dancing

This is easy enough – just complete the game on any difficulty setting.



You'll be treated to a full-length music video of Bayonetta's sexiest dance moves.

As awesome as that is, it's the music that steals the show. We can't stop listening.

Bonus skin › **Ratchet & Clank: ACIT** › Ratchet suits up

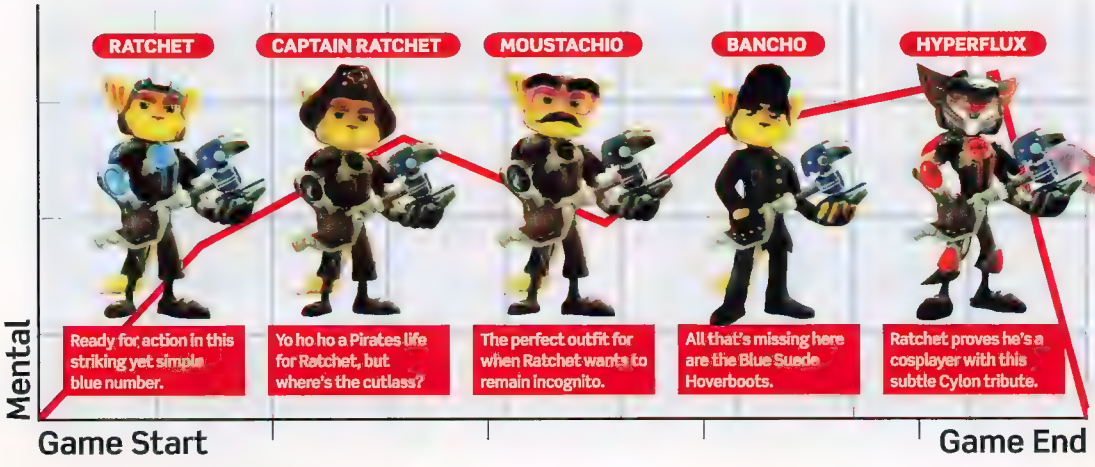
Playing as Ratchet, pause the game and press ↑, →, ↓, ←, △, ○, ✕, □, R3.

Bancho Ratchet unlocked! It's the winning entry from a skin competition in Japan.

Is he a Japanese gangster or an Elvis wannabe? We like to think a bit of both.

From zero to hero in... Ratchet & Clank

Our favourite lombax appears to be a fan of playing dress-up...


RATCHET
CAPTAIN RATCHET
MOUSTACHIO
BANCHO
HYPERFLUX
Ready for action in this striking yet simple blue number.
Yo ho ho a Pirates life for Ratchet, but where's the cutlass?
The perfect outfit for when Ratchet wants to remain incognito.
All that's missing here are the Blue Suede Hoverboots.
Ratchet proves he's a cosplayer with this subtle Cylon tribute.
Mental
Game Start
Game End

The Top 5 Cheats you *must* know

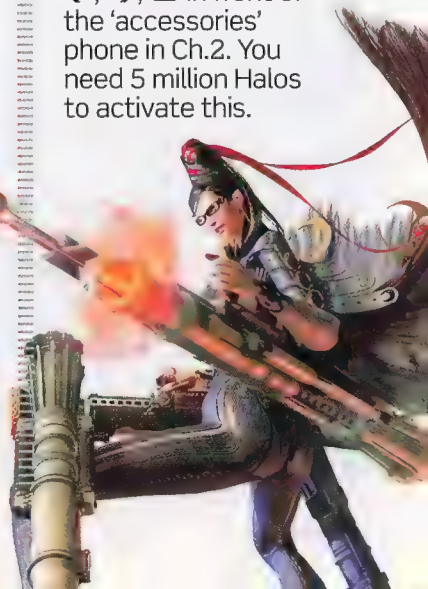
1 Darksiders
Harvester Scythe.
Enter 'The Hollow Lord' as a case-sensitive code then visit Vulgrim to get the Harvester Scythe.

2 Band Hero
Air Instruments
Complete the Aly & AJ 'Like Whoa' platinum bonus challenge in career mode to unlock Air Instruments.

3 Zombie Apocalypse
Bonus mode
Complete Day 55 to unlock the 7 Days of Hell bonus mode.

4 Lego Indiana Jones 2
Alien ship
Pause the game and enter the code PXT4UP to unlock the Alien ship.

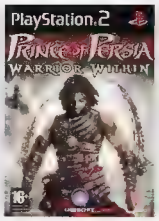
5 Bayonetta
Climax Bracelet
Enter ↑x4, ↓x4, ←, →, ←, →, L2 in front of the 'accessories' phone in Ch.2. You need 5 million Halos to activate this.



RETRO REVIEW

How POP: Warrior Within has matured with age

David Houghton



Pub Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft Montreal
FYI PS2 | 2004 | PSM56 87%
Ubisoft gave the platforming genre a shot in the arm with the first *Prince of Persia* remake, *Sands of Time*. Despite using the same mechanics, this sequel took a more action heavy route, and the Prince himself was given a moody, emo make-over

Making a sequel to a critically loved game is always a tricky prospect. Do you simply churn out more of the same and risk stagnation, or do you mix things up and potentially kill the original magic to make more cash? It's a choice Ubisoft Montreal were faced with following the release of *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, which – despite wowing reviewers and fans – had largely tanked in on shop shelves.

The chosen solution was a simple but fundamental change. The next *POP* game was to take the same easily-marketable journey down the path of angsty, dark, grittiness that comic books had first charted in the mid-'80s. The Prince became moody, the fighting became gory, and the gratuitous breasts became characters in their own right. And thus, a charismatic and charming franchise was forever lost.

That's the accepted wisdom anyway. But despite the darkened tone of *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*, the truth is actually a lot less grim.

The plot thickens

Having cheated death in the first game, the Prince is now stalked by the Dahaka, a sort of demonic Terminator charged with preserving fate. After seven years on the run from certain death, our hero is desperate, tired and very *very* moody. Sailing towards the fabled Island of Time, he hopes to reboot his destiny once and for all.

After the breezy wit of the first game, it's understandable that many were shocked by *WW*'s grimy opening. Set aboard a storm-drenched ship during a brutal siege, the tutorial focuses exclusively on the Prince's gratuitously violent new combat abilities. The previously camp and snarky Prince has been recast as Glowery McAngrybastard, and villainess Shahdee is introduced wearing a BDSM outfit made entirely out of dental floss.

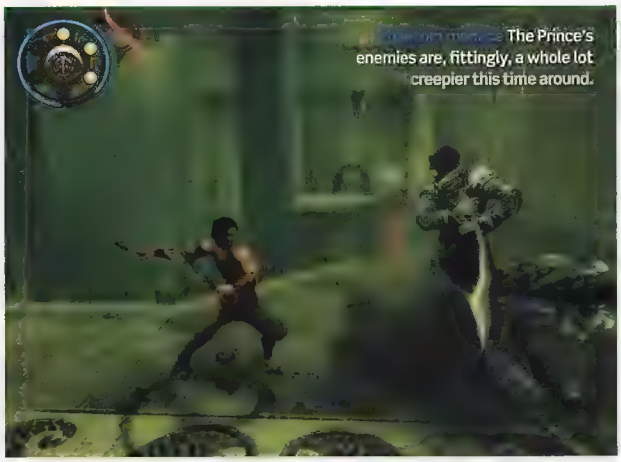
Similarly, the game's new island setting is initially almost uncomfortably bleak; a cold, grey desolation populated by skull-faced attackers, with an abundance of startlingly brutal murder to be had. So why is *Warrior Within* still great despite all the misery? Simple. The gameplay built around that startlingly brutal murder is amazing.

Wisely recognising that the previous *POP*'s groundbreaking gymnastic platform puzzling was already perfected, Ubisoft turned its attention to upgrading the limited combat mechanics. Using the same engine as *Sands of Time* and *Beyond Good & Evil*, *Warrior Within* took both games' flowing, contextual violence and multiplied it by *Devil May Cry*, making the Prince one of the most effective, versatile, and downright cool killers gaming has ever seen.

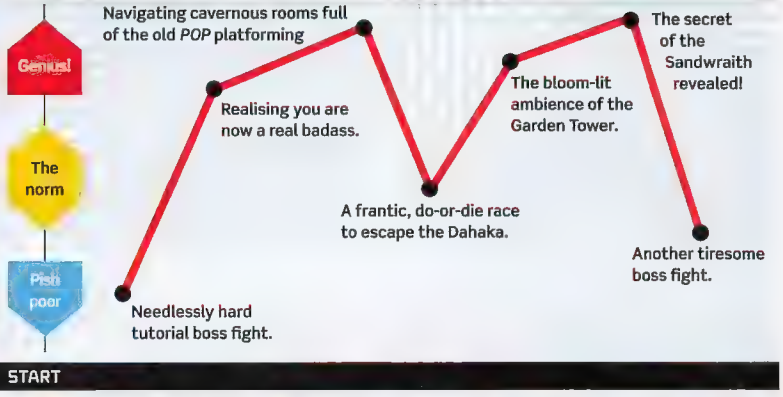
The defining moment...

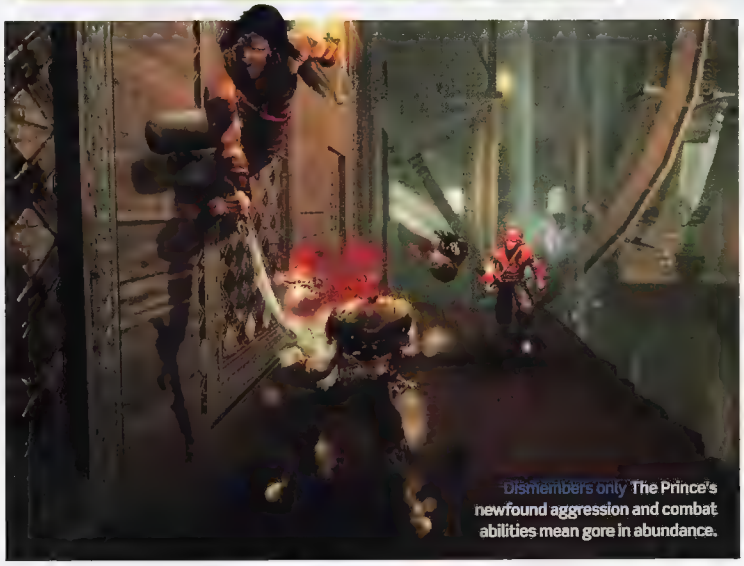
A slow death

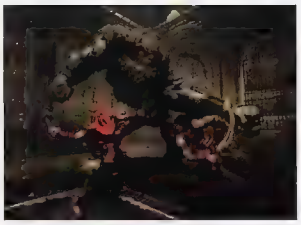
The best way to really see *Warrior Within*'s development over its predecessor is to use the Prince's slow motion powers during a hectic battle. With enemies slowed to a crawl you can take your time in planning a truly epic combo that shows off the full variety of the Prince's death-delivery tools, mastering the combat environment with systematic, gore-fuelled efficiency.


The Prince's enemies are, fittingly, a whole lot creepier this time around.

The *Warrior Within* thrill-o-graph


Genius!
The norm
Pish poor
Navigating cavernous rooms full of the old *POP* platforming
Realising you are now a real badass.
A frantic, do-or-die race to escape the Dahaka.
The bloom-lit ambience of the Garden Tower.
The secret of the Sandwraith revealed!
Another tiresome boss fight.
Needlessly hard tutorial boss fight.
START


Dismembers only The Prince's newfound aggression and combat abilities mean gore in abundance.



Need an example? You're set upon by ten grunts. You vault over the first one's head, cutting him down upon your descent. You parry the next with a kick, leap back towards a wall and spring off, sailing through the horde and landing on the other side in a whirlwind of gleaming death. You single out a goon and hurl him into the pack, scattering it asunder. You use the inertia of your throw to roll clear and grab a pillar on the edge of the skirmish area, whirling around it and slingshoting back into the fray, blades a-flail.

A bit of concentrated comboing, a few thrown weapons, a couple of disarmed mooks and a stealth strangulation later, everyone's dead and you haven't broken your flow.

Make or break

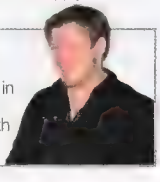
It's a deep, system; a dense catalogue of options which keeps its content available to players of all skill levels. Every move can be chained and immediately improvised upon and the simple but logical controls let you construct any conceivable combo.

Now that we're past the initial shock, it's easier to see what *Warrior Within* achieved. Indeed, a few particularly clumsy instances aside – the orgiastic S&M moaning of certain female enemies is unforgivable – the darkness is remarkably well constructed once you accept it on its own terms. While the early greyness mercifully gives way to more colourful environments, the game remains densely atmospheric; the claustrophobic, doom-laden air complimenting the Prince's new story perfectly. And while many accuse the game of replacing its predecessor's intelligent platforming with mindless violence, *Warrior Within* maintains everything that made the first game so special, simply presenting it in a more balanced package of gameplay.

If it weren't for the superficial murk and gore, we'd have simply praised the game as the natural and proper evolution of the series upon its release. Because that's really what it is. It's just that, like any angsty problem child, *Warrior Within* needs attention, understanding and patience to be appreciated.

CLASSIC VERDICT

Why now? The Price is due on the Silver Screen in May, and there's a new game on the way.
Final thought A storming action platformer, with brilliance aplenty beneath its mopey exterior.



The Top 5

POP facts

1 Cool casting
Kaileena, *WW*'s other scantily-clad female character, is voiced by Italian actress Monica Bellucci, of Matrix sequels fame.

© WireImage

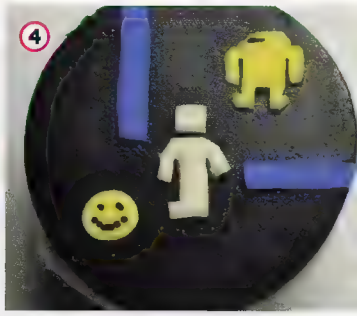
2 Bad taste
Reviewers weren't the only ones put off by the game's bleak tone. Original *POP* creator Jordan Mechner derided the new feel.

3 Heavy duty
In-keeping with the darker, moodier art style of *Warrior Within*, heavy metal band Godsmack were recruited to work on the soundtrack. No, we don't remember it either.

4 Poster boy
Although based on *Sands of Time*, posters for the upcoming *PoP* movie show Jake Gyllanhaal looking similar to the Prince's *Warrior Within* incarnation.

© Walt Disney Studios

5 Back-track
Dahaka's dialogue sounds like garbled nonsense but it's just English played backwards. Rewind time to understand it.

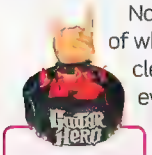


Game cakes impress, hint at mild insanity

Sure, we like cake but anyone who's flicked through Nintendo magazines will have noticed that Ninty fans seem to like nothing more than baking treats devoted to their heroes. You name it, some crazed Nintendo-loving 'enthusiast' has created it. But game cakes not featuring the cartoon plumber and pals have been a bit thin on the ground. Until recently that is, when there's been a rush of dedicated baking for other formats.

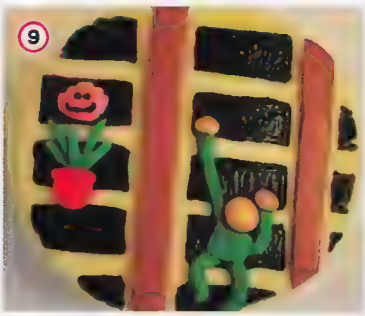
First, there's these 100 gaming cupcakes, baked by Robin Dahlberg of jewellery firm steelheadstudio.com to celebrate the new decade. And all we did was drink until we fell over – seems a bit pointless now.

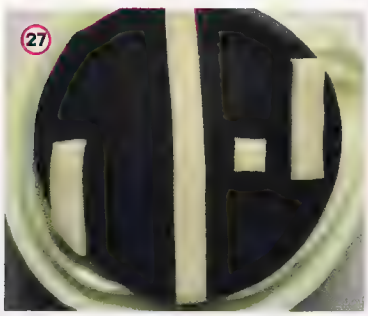
As you can see, some are board games but many are videogames – and they all look great, although, for obvious reasons, we're unable to judge how they taste. We particularly like the colourful *Bejeweled* cake, the old-school monochrome *Asteroids* cake and the – ahem – 'badass' *Duke Nukem* treat. Can you spot the *Resident Evil* cake? Marvellous. All we need now is a *Bayonetta* Swiss roll and we'll be properly stuffed.

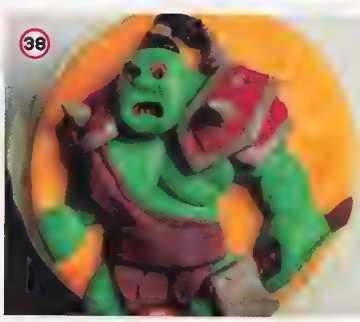


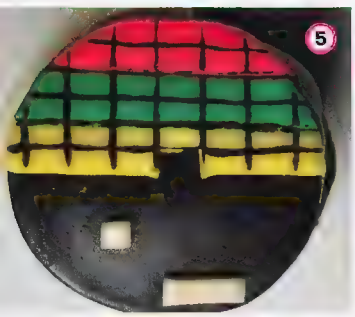
CULTURE

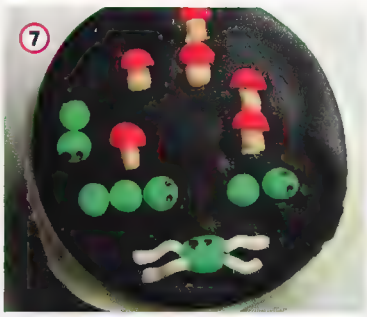
Not had enough cake? Turn the page to see a spectacular photo of what might be the greatest wedding cake of all time. There's no clearer symbol of everlasting love than the gaming character everyone has an emotional attachment to – *Portal*'s companion cube (*Are you OK? Ed*). That's what two ladies in Australia, Anli and Laura of New South Wales, went for. They even named one of their reception dinner tables the 'Glados table' – that's how much they love Valve's

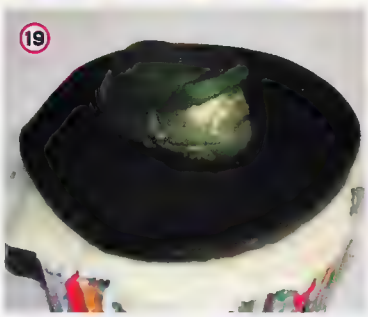


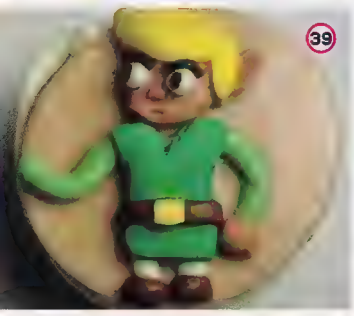






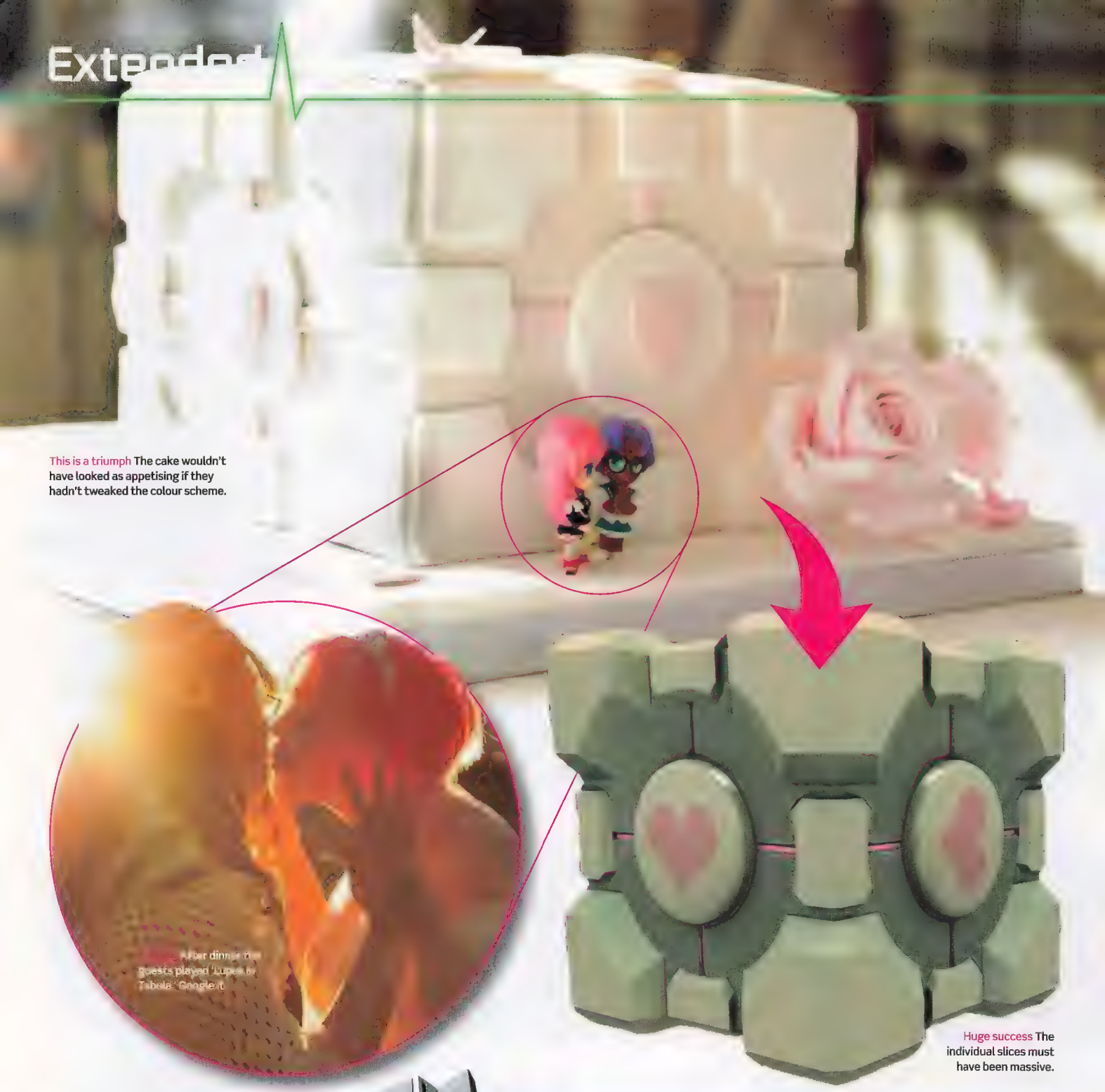






Answers

1) Guitar Hero
2) Battlezone
3) Bejewelled
4) Berzerk
5) Breakout
6) Settlers of Catan
7) Centipede
8) Combat
9) Crazy Climber
10) Defender
11) DigDug
12) Donkey Kong
13) Donkey Kong Jr
14) Duke Nukem
15) Final Fantasy VII
16) Frogger
17) Galaga
18) Asteroids
19) Halo
20) Joust
21) Mario Brothers
22) Moon Patrol
23) Mortal Kombat
24) Moon Patrol
25) PacMan
26) Pitfall
27) Pong
28) Qbert
29) Quake
30) Resident Evil
31) The Sims
32) Sonic
33) Space Invaders
34) Tempest
35) Tetris
36) Tomb Raider
37) Uno
38) World of Warcraft
39) Legend of Zelda
40) Monopoly

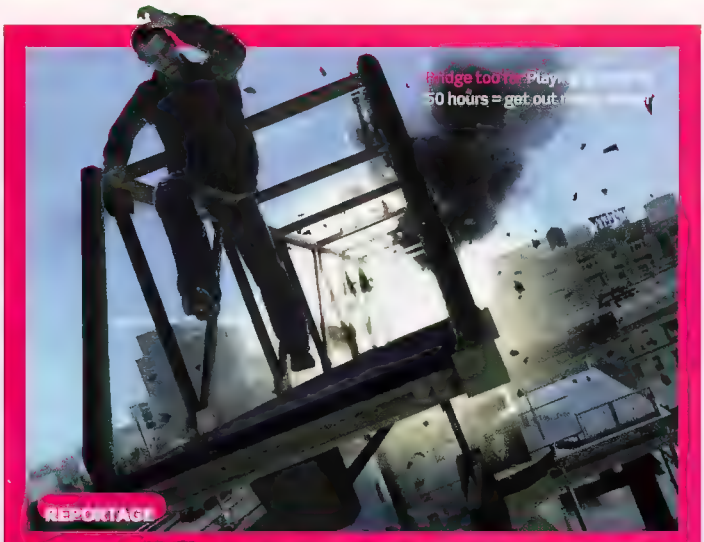


This is a triumph The cake wouldn't have looked as appetising if they hadn't tweaked the colour scheme.

Huge success The individual slices must have been massive.

puzzler. Then they partied into the night by blasting holes in nearby walls, diving through them and reappearing on the other side of the room (not really – they played a werewolf-themed card game).

Finally, here's the most accurate Sony-inspired edible excellence to date. Just look at the smooth icing and scale detail that makes up the best PS3 cake we've ever seen. It's been created by the talented hands of Debbie from debbiedoes cakes.net. Her site is packed with all kinds of wonders so pay it a visit.

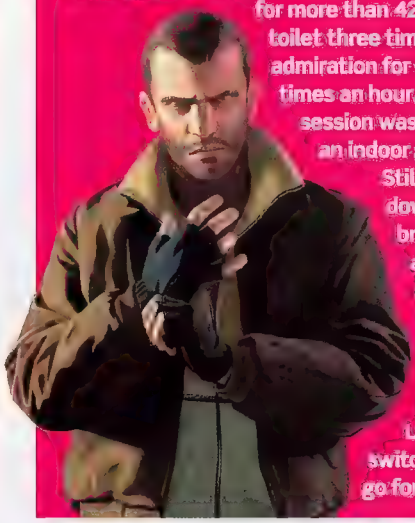


REPORTAGE

GTAIV world record broken - twice

What's the longest you've ever clocked up during one gaming session? We've probably notched up nine or ten hours in a row on the likes of *Metal Gear* or *Final Fantasy* in our time, but we've got nothing on Chirantan Pantnaik of Mumbia, India, who played *GTA4* for 40 hours and 20 minutes, shattering the previous world record of 28 hours. "I enjoyed the game very much," he said. "I enjoy playing long hours, it wasn't that exhausting for me."

Unfortunately for Chirantan, his record was broken mere weeks later by David Scherer, a student in Tennessee, USA, who played for more than 42 hours and only going to the toilet three times. We've got a lot of admiration for David - we go about three times an hour. Dave said his marathon session was inspired by his desire to build an indoor pool for his swimming team. Still, Chirantan shouldn't be too downhearted. Immediately after breaking the record - which he attributed to not drinking coffee and eating dates - for the first time, he pledged that next time he would play for 48 hours straight. Best of luck with that, Chirantan. Let's hope David doesn't just switch on his PS3 a week later and go for 50, eh? Medical madness.



REPORT

Gamers suffer from 'intimacy issues.'

According to a new report, men who love videogames have issues talking about... well, you know... *that*. A doctor at a rehab centre in Seattle has said that gamers struggle with issues centring around... ooh, we can't say it... eek... *carpentry*. No, wait, *sex*, that was it.

Hilarie Cash of the Heavensfield rehab unit, for internet and gaming addicts, says that her patients are "socially uncomfortable in the real world... and have handled their sexuality with pornography. That's a recipe for intimacy disorder – they don't know how to bring sexuality and social things together." Yes, as you've probably been told before by the Daily Mail, being a gamer means you're no good with the ladies. Now – onto the rudest stories of the month.

1 PSPenis

Kade Goodman of Omaha, USA, got a PSP for Christmas. Sadly, it was a second-hand PSP, and the shop had forgotten to format it – meaning the first thing Kade saw on turning on his new toy was... a giant penis wallpaper. Cue uproar.

2 World of Phwoarcraft

Forget match.com, try *World Of Warcraft*. 16-year-old Andrew Kane of Ontario found love on *WOW* with 42-year-old Laurie Price of Toronto and ran away to be with her. He did say he was 20 though. Actually, stick with Match.

3 Do Ron Ron

Ron Jeremy is one of the porn industry's most notorious stars. And he doesn't like games: "Violent videogames are a much bigger negative influence on kids [than porn]," he said. Just don't copy his 'tache kids – stay safe.

My first love

Commando on the Commodore 64

By: Daniel Dawkins
Editor, PSM3

When did you first realise you and games were meant for each other?
I was eleven years old, but had been into games for a year or two. You see, this isn't the story of my first love... but my first affair. I knew it was wrong, but I couldn't stop thinking about it. What? Commando on the C64, of course.

Was it the gameplay or graphics that seduced you?
Partly graphics, partly sound – but mostly Bigger Boy syndrome. I'd been dragged round a friend of my parent's house, and their teenage son showed me some games on C64. I had a Spectrum 48k, and it was like being shown a full colour bongo video after years of sneaking glimpses at crumpled page threes. I'd never seen a game so colourful, with such crisp sound.

Ever tried to relive the moment?
God, no – I'm not mental. But at the time, it was like glimpsing into an impossible world of opportunity. Games in colour? Sound coming *out of the TV*? It blew my mind. Try as I might to pretend *Karnov* looked as good, I *knew*. Oh, the pain.

Online Play

Your ultimate guide to the online month

Want to play with other PSM3 readers? Go to www.psm3mag.co.uk

HIGHLIGHTS

Borderlands aces co-op
MAG Beta interview
Drunk in *Home*

THE BIG REVIEW

Army Of Two takes on all comers

Great game, but the multi-player lags behind

Army of Two online is like being given a birthday present wrapped in sheet metal. You know there's something great hidden inside, but you can't quite get at it.

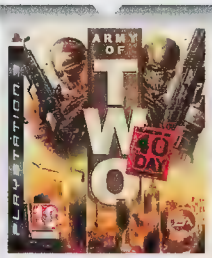
The problem? Horrible networking issues, at least at the time of writing, which turn an otherwise great game into a chugging, disconnecting mess. Frustrating, because when *The 40th Day*'s multi-player works it's a hoot.

Replacing computer AI with the bloodlust of real people turns the core cover shooting into a much more frenetic, in-your-face affair, but although it's less methodical than in campaign, the heavy teamwork focus keeps things interesting.

Teams are usually limited to five players so as to maintain focused tactical play (though the best game mode, detailed on the next page, caps it at two), and working with your squad on a tight assault or defence makes for brutal but satisfying fun.

Campaign co-op is packed with ingenious two player set-pieces, but like the rest of *AOT*'s online, it just doesn't physically work yet. This needs to be patched immediately. **Dave Houghton**

Info-burst



Pub EA
Dev EA
Players 1-10
FYI PSM121 | 85%
Modes Co-op campaign | Co-op deathmatch | Warzone | Control Extraction

A massive improvement over the first *Army of Two*, *40th Day* is a smart slice of tactical co-op shooting with clever ideas that more than make up for its rough edges. If you're playing offline that is –the servers are currently a bit of a mess.

Want to know more?
Visit the official *AOT* forums at bit.ly/9ud93r

Army Of Two

"It's like being given a birthday pre[illegible] wrapped in sheet metal"

3 things you need to know NOW

The main competitive game modes revealed

1

Warzone
This mode cycles through mission types, much like its *Killzone 2* namesake. Search and destroy, base capture and objective defence all feature.

2

Control
This is about taking and holding control points. It's a bit like *MW2*'s Domination mode, except with one randomly generated target area at a time.

3

Co-op Deathmatch
By far the most fun of the lot. Team up with a mate or a randomer and use two-man tactics to take down other partnerships. Fast and thrilling.

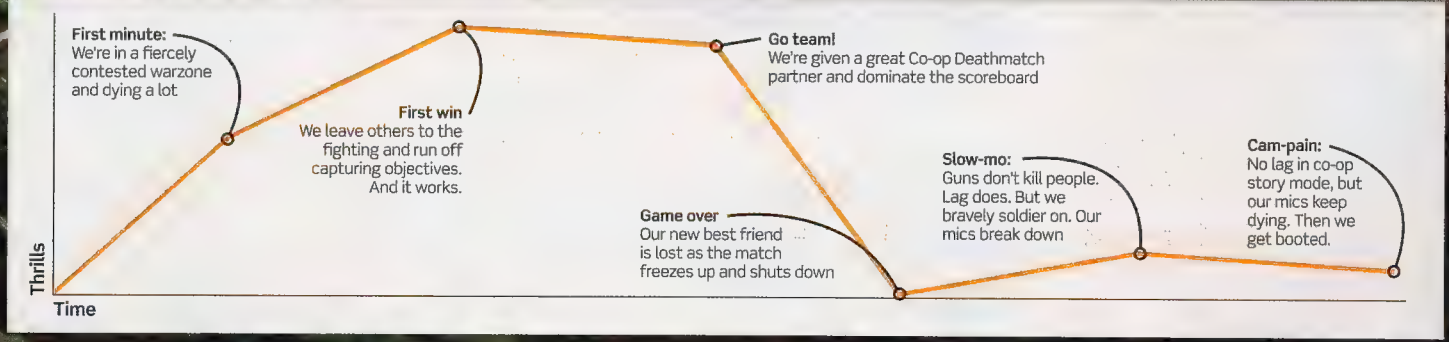
Online test Q&A

What is it like for beginners?
A tad bewildering at first, but no more so than any other online shooter. It'll take you a little while to get up to speed with the pace and aggression of the online game, but picking the meatier weapon load-outs will certainly help.

Are there any technical problems?
Only everywhere. Even using monster internet pipes we were lucky to find a game with more than one block of connection strength, and plenty had a zero rating. Obviously that led to a lag-fest of quasi-biblical proportions, with gameplay jerkier than an electrocution victim in a silent movie. And so far we've found it impossible to get through fifteen minutes of campaign co-op without being booted. EA has a patch in the works though. Can't come soon enough.

Anything else I should know?
Visit armyoftwo.com to create some intricate custom armour and mask designs. You can then download them to your PSN ID for use in the game. It's a great way to add your own personality to your online avatar.

Online Thrill-o-meter


First minute:
We're in a fiercely contested warzone and dying a lot
First win
We leave others to the fighting and run off capturing objectives. And it works.
Go team!
We're given a great Co-op Deathmatch partner and dominate the scoreboard
Game over
Our new best friend is lost as the match freezes up and shuts down
Slow-mo:
Guns don't kill people. Lag does. But we bravely soldier on. Our mics break down
Cam-pain:
No lag in co-op story mode, but our mics keep dying. Then we get booted.
Thrills
Time

PSM3's Top Online Games

25 of the best games to play online

FIRST PERSON SHOOTER

1 **Modern Warfare 2**
The best shooter on PS3, with a thriving online community; initially hard to get into, but spec-ops (co-op) is kinder.
Rating 98% - Issue 121

2 Killzone 2
3 Call Of Duty: World At War
4 Borderlands
5 The Orange Box

ACTION / ADVENTURE

1 **Uncharted 2**
Looks stunning, and the climbing mechanics – in versus play and co-op – lend a fresh feel. More accessible than *MW2*.
Rating 95% - Issue 121

2 GTA IV
3 Warhawk
4 Army Of Two: The 40th Day
5 LittleBigPlanet

SPORT

1 **FIFA 10**
Fuss-free, highly playable and no major lag issues. 10 vs 10, and Be A Pro are highlights. *PES 2010* is more tactical, arguably.
Rating 90% - Issue 118

2 Madden NFL 10
3 PES 2010
4 Virtua Tennis 2009
5 NBA 2k10

RACER

1 **Colin McRae DiRT 2**
Brilliant, lag-free online racing with an online career mode that feeds into your main profile. The King – until *GRID 2*...
Rating 89% - Issue 114

2 Burnout Paradise
3 Race Driver GRID
4 WipEout HD
5 NFS: Shift

BEAT 'EM UP

1 **Street Fighter IV**
A steep learning curve – you'll need reactions of a mongoose to survive online, but beating human opponents never gets old.
Rating 95% - Issue 118

2 Soulcalibur IV
3 UFC 2009
4 Tekken 6
5 Super Street Fighter HD Remix

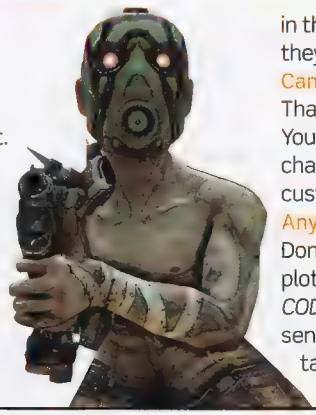
Don't agree? Let us know on the forums

More Reviews

We rate the rest of this month's online games

Borderlands

REVIEW A game designed around co-op play, and it shows...



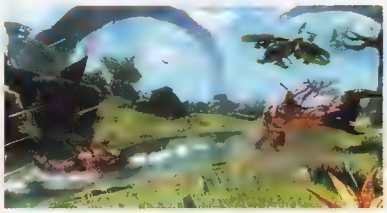
What is it like for beginners?
The campaign difficulty increases at the same pace as your character improves, but joining higher level players will provide a massive XP boost.
What's the community like?
Co-op with friends is by far the best way to play through *Borderlands*, but we've found the wider community to be friendly and accommodating too.
Are there any technical problems?
We've seen a few messages pop up warning that players are too far ahead in the campaign to play together when they're not. Ignore them.
Can I customise my online profile?
That's what *Borderlands* is all about. You have a choice of four different character classes, and then 27 customisable special abilities to tweak.
Anything else I should know?
Don't go in expecting an epic, twisting plot or meticulously designed, *COD*-style, set-pieces. The joy is in the sense of progressive teamwork as you take on the planet. **Dave Houghton**

Info-burst

Pub 2K Games
Dev Gearbox
Players 1-4
FYI PSM121 | 83%
Borderlands' brilliant co-op RPG-shooter gameplay is unlike anything else around at the moment. Accessible shooting and tight tactics blend with deep character customisation and rampant looting.

Avatar

REVIEW It's pretty but vacant



Nothing doing **This static screen of *Avatar* provides marginally less competitive gameplay.**

What's it like for beginners?
Easy. The gameplay is straightforward and you'll need time to get used to the controls because there's no opposition.
What's the community like?
Non-existent. We encountered roughly one player for every match, and the number of players we set eyes on in-game was even lower.
Are there any technical problems?
Everything ran smoothly, without a hint of lag. We got disconnected once, but given how much wasn't happening it was no great loss.
Anything else I should know?
You can bag the online Trophies by cheating, alone. **Dave Houghton**

Info-burst

Pub Ubisoft | **Dev** Ubisoft Montreal
Players 1-16 | **FYI** PSM122 | 63%
Licensed from that film you might have heard of, *Avatar* is a competent, playable, but wholly unexciting shooter. Think *Lost Planet*, except tropical and really, really average to play. No-one plays it online, sadly.

REVIEW

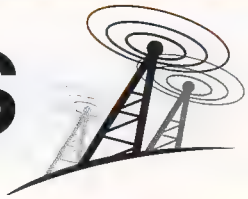
Vancouver 2010

Pub Sega | **Players** 1-4
Modes Single events and leaderboards

Multi-player captures Vancouver at its best. Sadly, that isn't saying much as the action on offer is short-lived and low-rent. Still, racing down slaloms with mates is infinitely better than competing with the infallible AI, and it's a good laugh when other people see you wipe out on the Ski Jump. Not worth buying the game for, but if you already own it you may as well give the online modes a go. **PSM3**

Network News

Beta trials, dev Q&As... the future of online now



How *you* changed MAG

Developer explains how they tweaked the game following up...

Why did you decide to use online beta to test MAG?
It was clear from the outset that the unprecedented player count and numerous customisation options in *MAG* would foster a chaotic environment that demanded thorough public testing. Using the data that we've gathered over the past few months we've been able to refine the gameplay experience to a point that would not have been possible without a public beta.

What have you learnt since you first opened the beta?
We often used feedback to eliminate exploits and adjust the game's many systems, but we even went so far as to implement new features like proximity chat.

Have you had any trouble convincing new players join a certain faction?
This was something that was hotly debated in the studio before the beta went live. Sure, we all had our favourites, but it was difficult to foresee if any one faction would dominate the landscape. To our surprise, the population of each PMC has been balanced throughout the beta, but that only serves to validate the effort that we poured into them.

It's been hinted that low-ranking players will get the chance to become a commander. How will this work exactly?
All players will get a chance to apply for a squad leader position when they reach level 15. From there, they accumulate leadership points based on their success on the battlefield. Once certain thresholds are reached they can opt in to lead a platoon or a company.

Want to know more?
Read our full *MAG* review on page 84

Choose your destiny Building up an allegiance for a faction is one of the best bits of *MAG*.

Now Playing

The games we're loving right now

Team effort *Op: Flash* might be occasionally frustrating, but the co-op play is seminal.

"I decide to make another controversial executive decison"

Operation Flashpoint teaches Owen Hill's squadmates the harsh reality of human sacrifice...

This wasn't going to play out like the other six attempts. I'd made an executive decision to enter the base solo – a tactic that would mean quick death for the majority of *Flashpoint*'s missions. I told the rest of the squad to sit back.

Two silent headshots later, everything was going to plan. I'd infiltrated the base and laid down my C4. Next – a quick escape, one detonator click and a short run to the extraction point. This was the ultimate stealth mission – this was textbook *Op: Flash*. I crawled to the concrete barrier that enveloped the base, held ⊗ and braced as the lengthy 'vault' animation kicked in. But that was all it took. FWIP... my arm caught a bullet... FWIP... then my leg. I was bleeding to death but there wasn't time to even *unwrap* the field dressing – I'd get chewed up. Then I remembered my hubris.

Picture It

One yelp into the headset was all it took. Three PSN iDs followed my commands, flanked the enemy and unleashed hell, giving me just enough time to drop to the floor and pull out the kit. I couldn't aim straight and was staggering, but the mission was live.

War crime

I paced towards the copper. Another Chinese bullet hit home, this time in my chest. I patched up immediately – one pint of blood doesn't last long. As I applied the bandage I heard my teammates' enthusiasm fade. They'd all taken hits too. It seemed we weren't destined to regroup after all so I made another controversial executive decision, clicked the detonator and exploded the tanker along with a few enemy squads and... some of my best friends. I muttered something about the clunky controls, ignored their complaints and edged up the hillside, laying down the last of my rifle ammo in an attempt to suppress. It didn't take long before my last clip ran dry but I was *almost* there. Next, my 9mm – not as effective, but it sure felt good. Eventually I made it to the chopper and took my seat as bullets pinged off the fuselage. The gunner started his chaingun and let rip. I'd been shot in my leg, arm and stomach but was alive.

As I flew over their bodies my friends' frustration was obvious. Until each of our Trophies pinged up that is – then it changed to elation. Another textbook *Flashpoint* mission.

Owen Hill

Now Playing *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising.*
This month Bled from the stomach, leg and arm. Sacrificed his squad for the greater good.
Also Playing *Demon's Souls*

Picture It

Exploitation It turns out that *MW2* has its fair share of dirty online cheats. Who'd have thought?

"Check the score. We've got nuke boosters"

Cheaters beware. Mike Sterry is watching...

Nuke-boosters. The very mention of them is likely to have your average *Modern Warfare 2* player spitting blood. Working as a twosome, the diabolical boosters will camp out somewhere quiet on the map, and using silenced weapons, the Cold-Blooded perk, claymores and tactical insertions, will proceed to headshot his buddy repeatedly to achieve the whopping 25-kill streak required to call in a nuke. Each time the player dies, he respawns right next to his pal thanks to some devious use of the tactical insertion tool. You get the idea. So why do they bother with such a dirty tactic? To bag a pile of XP each time they pull it off – it levels them up quicker than they would by using legitimate tactics and their own skill, which is normally severely lacking. Is the accelerated XP enough to justify ruining games for everyone else though? No.

Anyway, a friend and I were playing Free-For-All on the Underpass map when we noticed one player's score creeping up rather quickly. It was one of those rare games when everyone had their headset on, so we jumped out of party chat.

The discovery

"Check the score, I think we've got nuke boosters," I said. "Aye, I thought so mate," crackled an Irish voice. "Anybody seen where they're camping on the map?"

"No," said my new friend over proximity chat. Then he had a novel idea: "How about we stop killing each other till we've found them?"

Common goal

Bizarrely, despite having done our absolute best to destroy each other seconds earlier, all six players agreed to the armistice. It was beautiful. All hostilities ceased, and the six of us swept the map. My friend and I checked a swathe of foliage near the titular underpass, and sure enough, the boosters were there. One opened fire, and my friend went down, but not before I took the booster down myself. The second cheat then shot me. But fate smiled upon us, for I had carelessly died four times in a row. I was in Final Stand and the my enemy fell to three bullets from my FAMAS. Looking at the score, they had been at 24 kills, one shy of the nuke. Such was their fury, the boosters unleashed a torrent of hate upon us. All they heard back was the cold laughter of their peers.

Mike Sterry
Now Playing *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2.*
This month Thwarted the dirty tactics of some online cheats.
Also Playing *Fallout 3 Mothership Zeta.*

The Best Stuff on the Store

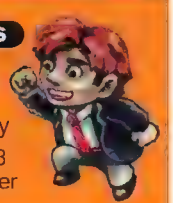
PSN must-buys

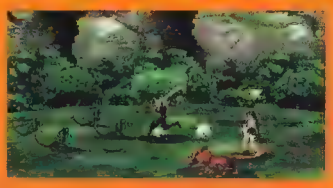
BEST MOVIES
1. Star Trek
2. Dark Knight
3. Public Enemies
4. The Godfather
5. Borat

BEST DEMOS
1. Metal Gear Solid 4
2. Batman AA
3. LittleBigPlanet
4. Gran Turismo
5. Heavy Rain

BEST VIDZONE MUSIC
1. Foo Fighters – The Pretender
2. Johnny Cash – Hurt
3. Beyonce – Single Ladies
4. Kings of Leon – Sex on Fire
5. Eric Prydz – Call on me

BEST PSN GAMES
1. Braid
2. Warhawk
3. WipEout HD Fury
4. Battlefield 1943
5. Pixeljunk Shooter





BEST PSONE CLASSICS
1. Final Fantasy VII
2. Metal Gear Solid
3. Syndicate Wars
4. Syphon Filter
5. Street Fighter Alpha

DLC Update

The latest downloadable content to hit PSN

New DLC brings Resi 5 out of Africa

Dust off your copies of *Resi 5* – it's time to wade back into zombie (well, parasite-infested-human) hell. Capcom have brought word that there are two, brand-new episodes on their way as DLC. The first, *Lost In Nightmares* is out February 17, and in it you play as Jill Valentine and Chris Redfield investigating the horrors that lurk in the basement of the Umbrella Mansion. This extensive episode can be tackled in co-op or single player, and it adds a new element to the *Resi 5* story. On the same day, you'll be able to buy new outfits for Chris (Warrior costume) and Sheva (Folklore costume) that can be used in the main game and versus multi-player modes.

On March 4 a second DLC episode will be released. This one, called Desperate Escape, sees BSAA agent Josh Stone helping Jill Valentine to flee the Tricell Facility where she had been undergoing mind-control. Again, it'll feed into the *Resi 5* story and be playable in co-op. Keeping that company are two more Chris (Heavy metal costume) and Sheva (sexy business wear) outfits.

At the time of going to press Capcom hadn't revealed pricing, but rumour suggests each episode will cost around £4, and each outfit roughly £1.50 each. Worth it? We're always game for more *Resi 5* co-op...

Download queue

Game-boosting extras you can download right now

1 Uncharted 2

Download [illegible] Cost [illegible]

Want more *inFamous*, *Killzone 2* or *Resistance* in your *Uncharted 2* multi-player? They're a bit pricey, but good if you're a massive Sony-exclusive fanboy.

2 Fat Princess

Download Brownie Town Map Cost Free

This new city-themed map comes free with patch 1.04, which also fixes some of the ranking errors. Small, but hey, it's free. Can't argue with that.

3 Heavy Rain

Download [illegible] Cost TBA

The first episodic 'Chronicle' sees Madison Paige investigating the lair of The Taxidermist, a deranged killer. It's the same level used to demo the game at E3.

Public house Actually, it's more of a *private* house. If you buy London Pub it won't be full of strangers. Sad.

This month Running your own traditional English pub. Or at least attempting to...

No place like Home

Raw reports from Sony's life sim

Home's new London Pub space is misleading. You might think it's some kind of bustling social hub where everyone congregates to drink imaginary pints. But, really, it's a *personal* space: one that replaces the default 'harbour studio', and that you can only *invite* people to. So that's the first hurdle in running your own London pub inside *Home*. Well, after you've visited the Estate Store and handed over £2.99 in real-world cash.

Authenticity

They've certainly got the details right. The murky atmosphere of a Soho boozer has been wonderfully recreated. The toilets are especially appealing, with their cracked mirrors, discoloured walls and row of old-fashioned urinals. It might seem strange spending real-world money on an accurate replica of a dingy inner-city pub, but... well, that's because it is.

So, here we are. In our pub. Our bloody pub. There's a distressing lack of customers. Mainly because we don't have any friends on *Home* at the moment. In the absence of any patrons, we edit our appearance to give us more of a traditonal landlord vibe. We add a bulbous beer belly, a big grey beard and a bald head to our generic avatar. Perfect.

Drawing business

We venture into Home Square, *Home*'s main hub. "Hello, friends!" I bellow in the middle of a group of people sat around by a video screen advertising, coincidentally, the London Pub. "Come to my pub! Free shots for the first 100 people!" Nothing. In true *Home* style, everyone's just sitting around in silence. But just as I'm about to leave, one guy stands up. He looks like a Mediterranean GAP model, which I'm sure is a reflection of his real self. "lol look at ur beard". Great.

I return to the pub, which I've named the Nags Buttock, because it sounds retro. I play darts on my own for a bit. It's pretty well designed, but, well, it's darts. I wander around for a bit. If you look through the front door you can see a sliver of London street outside, mysteriously empty. Suddenly I feel like I'm in the film I Am Legend. But starring a squat, bearded, dead-eyed 3D *Home* Avatar. And that's as bad as it sounds. "Time, gentlemen." I whisper, quietly, before quitting *Home*. A lonely tear trickles down my cheek. Mentally.

Home Q&A

Q. What is Home?
A. **A virtual world that you can access from your XMB. It's filled with other PS3 users, represented as 3D avatars, that you can interact with. Like a chatroom, but in three dimensions.**

Q. How do I get started?
A. **It's free. Well, the basics are. To get the best 'spaces' (levels, basically) and the coolest clothes/costumes for your avatar, you'll need to spend real money through the Store.**

Q. What is there to do?
A. **Besides chatting and dancing, there are a load of mini-games and arcade machines to play on. Some are great, some are rubbish, and many come with cosmetic rewards for your avatar.**

Andy Kelly is Acting Features Editor on PSM3. On average he visits real-world pubs twice a week.

Game on **The darts mini-game is decent, but pointless on your own. Get some pals involved.**

Browser

Selecting this month's best entertainment

PS3 Top Twenty

The ultimate buyer's guide to PSM3's top-rated PS3, PSN and PSP titles. If it's here, it belongs in your collection

1

LittleBigPlanet

"The game PS3 was waiting for – fun, richly creative and truly fresh. The best toybox you'll ever get to play with."

Pub Sony
Dev Media Molecule
PSM 107

97

2

Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

"Sublime in single, co-op and multi-player. Quite simply an incredible all-round package."

Pub Activision
Dev Infinity Ward
PSM 121

96

3

GTAIV

"Imperfect, but the most focused, compelling *GTA* outing ever takes 'last-gen' gaming to new next-gen highs."

Pub Rockstar
Dev Rockstar North
PSM 101

96

4

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

"Gorgeous, funny, and epic. A landmark adventure and a great showcase for your PS3."

Pub Sony
Dev Naughty Dog
PSM 120

95

5

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots

"A richly-layered masterpiece, but resolving the series' epic history takes its emotional toll."

Pub Konami
Dev Koj Productions
PSM 102

95

6

Street Fighter IV

"Nostalgic yet truly evolutionary, a call to arms for gamers of any age and *Street Fighter* skill. Exceptional stuff."

Pub Capcom
Dev Capcom
PSM 110

95

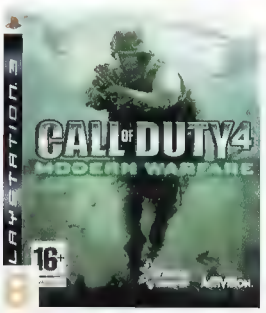
7

Assassin's Creed 2

"Clever, clever stuff. Superb action and a smart, varied and well-rounded story – the perfect sequel."

Pub Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft
PSM 121

94



8

Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

"An invigorating FPS, leaving such a dramatic footprint that all others will have to work hard."

Pub Activision
Dev Infinity Ward
PSM 95

94

9

BioShock 2

"Tops the original in terms of storytelling and combat. A worthy successor to one of the decade's best. Brilliant."

Pub 2K Games
Dev 2K Marin
PSM 123

93

10

Oblivion

"An RPG offering an experience that no other PS3 title can lay claim to. It's not perfect, but feels close enough."

Pub Ubisoft
Dev Bethesda
PSM 87

93

PSP Top 10

LocoRoco
Issue 76 | 93%
"It's simple to pick up and play and equally hard to put down. The best PSP game we've played."

Burnout Legends
Issue 67 | 92%
"Our favourite game on PSP. A fast, fun racer with great online play."

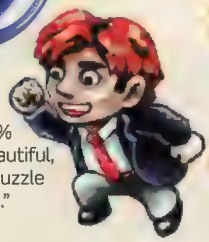
Lumines 2
Issue 82 | 92%
"Games like this are what your PSP was made for. Hypnotic puzzle action that you'll play for ages."

GTA: Vice City Stories
Issue 81 | 91%
"One of the best games on PSP. An example of top-drawer fun."

Virtua Tennis World Tour
Issue 65 | 91%
"This is a 'must have' title. Easily the Roger Federer of tennis games. Ace."

PlayStation Network Top 10

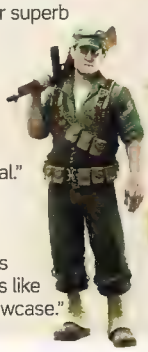
The ten best games to download today...



1 Braid
Issue 123 | 92%
"Complex and beautiful, one of the best puzzle games of all time."

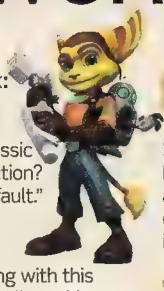
2 Warhawk
Issue 92 | 90%
"The perfect opener for the PlayStation Network. Rich, rewarding and exciting."

3 PixelJunk Shooter
Issue 123 | 89%
"Satisfying, well constructed, and elegant to play – another superb PixelJunk game."



4 Battlefield 1943
Issue 116 | 87%
"This well polished, if slightly limited, multi-player game is a real steal."

5 GT5 Prologue
Issue 100 | 87%
"The attention to detail is staggering and it handles like a dream. A technical showcase."

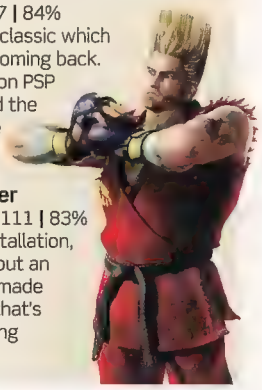


6 Ratchet & Clank: Quest for Booty
Issue 105 | 87%
"Four more hours of classic *Tools of Destruction* action? Frankly, this is hard to fault."

7 Blast Factor
Issue 87 | 85%
"There's very little wrong with this *Geometry Wars* rip-off. It'll provide you with hours of arcade-style fun."

8 Super Street Fighter 2 HD
Issue 109 | 84%
"Glory-era *SF* that'll delight nostalgists, but near-vital for every fighting fan."

9 Tekken: Dark Resurrection
Issue 87 | 84%
"A fighting classic which keeps you coming back. Fits right in on PSP and PS3 and the online mode is great."



10 Flower
Issue 111 | 83%
"Half art installation, half game, but an exquisitely made PSN game that's oddly relaxing to play."

11

Batman: Arkham Asylum

"An incredible adventure. Only weak detective bits and a handful of lame bosses let it down."

Pub Eidos
Dev Rocksteady
PSM 118

92

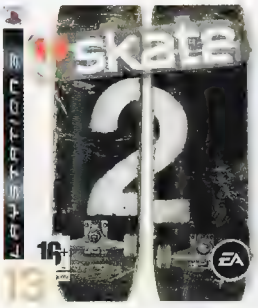
12

Far Cry 2

"Challenging, immersive safari shooter with liberating tactical freedom... *Far Cry 2* is a game you'll live in."

Pub Ubisoft
Dev Ubisoft
PSM 107

91



13

Skate 2

"Instinctive, with near-infinite potential and intuitive controls; only familiarity numbs its raw, playable thrills."

Pub EA
Dev EA Black Box
PSM 110

91

14

Rock Band 2

"This makes you feel more like being in a band than *GH:WT*, meaning this polished sequel edges out its near rivals."

Pub EA
Dev Harmonix
PSM 109

91

15

Guitar Hero 5

"Not a re-invention but the most thorough and polished *GH* yet. We finally have a game to rival EA's *Rock Band 2*."

Pub Activision
Dev Neversoft
PSM 119

91

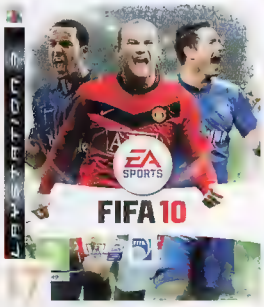
16

The Orange Box

"Five ace games in one awesome package. The slowdown shouldn't stop you having an amazing blast from start to finish."

Pub EA
Dev Valve
PSM 96

90



17

FIFA 10

"The best *FIFA* yet. Will even make huge *PES* fans think twice. Like Mourinho, this year's *FIFA* really is the special one."

Pub EA
Dev EA Canada
PSM 119

90

18

Fallout 3

"Imaginative, epic and brilliant, but not for instant-fix arcade gamers. Continues the tradition of great *Fallout* games."

Pub Bethesda
Dev Bethesda
PSM 107

90

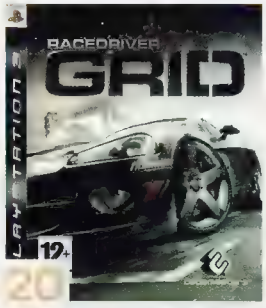
19

Ratchet & Clank: A Crack in Time

"Massive, rewarding, funny and gorgeous-looking – all you'd expect, plus some cute new twists."

Pub Sony
Dev Insomniac
PSM 119

90



20

Racedriver GRID

"Action-packed, content-heavy and beautiful to look at. *GRID* ticks all the boxes, and is now available for cheap."

Pub Codemasters
Dev Codemasters
PSM 102

90

Gitaroo Man Lives
Issue 78 | 90%
"Challenging, weird and wonderful, this is unlike anything else on PSP."

GTA: Liberty City Stories
Issue 69 | 90%
"Frustrating at times but this colossal beauty was born to run on PSP."

Crush
Issue 88 | 90%
"Intelligent, inventive... its main drawback is its steep learning curve. But massive fun throughout."

Final Fantasy Tactics
Issue 93 | 89%
"Epic, tactical and polished beyond belief. This will definitely work your brain."

Tekken: Dark Resurrection
Issue 78 | 89%
"Home-console-quality scrapping that doesn't hurt your thumbs."

Early Warning System

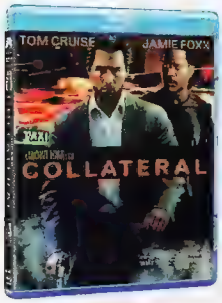
This year's best PS3 releases – and beyond – on one handy page...

3 Months Away

GAME

Lost Planet 2

Venture deep into the guts of giant alien insects and destroy them from the *inside*. Capcom's epic shooter makes a return in May, with improved multi-player.



BLU-RAY

Collateral

Michael Mann's hyper-tense thriller about a hitman (Tom Cruise) and his unwilling Los Angeles cabbie accomplice (Jamie Foxx). Cruise's performance is impeccable, and Mann's slick city imagery will look stunning on Blu-ray.

GAME

Quantum Theory

With its burly characters and cover system, this has been called 'the Japanese *Gears of War*'. It's set in an enormous tower that's actually *alive*, and changes as you move through it.

6 Months Away

GAME

POP: The Forgotten Sands

This new *Prince of Persia* takes the series back to the way it was in *Sands of Time*. There's an emphasis on platforming and time-manipulation.

GAME

Alpha Protocol

The world's first spy RPG, from the guys in charge of *Fallout: New Vegas*, is in the final stages of production. Be Bourne, Bauer or Bond with its emergent, choice-led, tactical gameplay.

GAME

UFC Undisputed 2010

THQ's brutal, realistic brawler returns, with refined physics and an updated roster. It's going toe-to-toe with EA's rival game, *MMA*, this year.

9+ Months Away

GAME

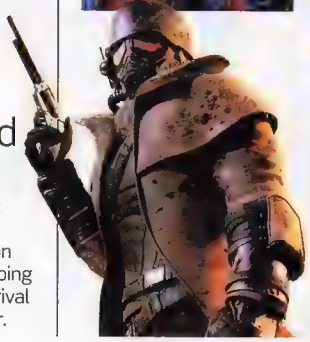
Max Payne 3

Max has finally snapped, and is now living in Rio, all bearded and bloated. But his thirst for revenge remains unquenched, and he's back to get even with the criminals who've ruined his life.

GAME

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow

A fresh start for the *Castlevania* series, this will ape games like *God of War* and *Prince of Persia* in terms of action. Kojima is its producer.



GAME

Fallout: New Vegas

Taking place three years after *Fallout 3* and set in the Mojave desert wasteland, this is a sharper, wittier, more colourful take on the *Fallout* universe. See p22 for the full story.

Full Release Schedule

The best of the rest

February

Aliens vs Predator	Sega
BioShock 2	2K Games
Blazblue: Calamity Trigger	PQube
Dante's Inferno	EA
Heavy Rain	Sony
ModNation Racers	Sony
White Knight Chronicles	Sony

March

Battlefield Bad Company 2	EA
Dead 2 Rights: Retribution	Namco Bandai
Final Fantasy XIII	Square Enix
God of War 3	Sony
Just Cause 2	Square Enix
Quantum Theory	Tecmo KOEI
Singularity	Activision
Sonic & Sega All Stars Racing	Sega
Yakuza 3	Sega

April

Mafia 2	2K Games
Nier	Square Enix
Red Dead Redemption	Rockstar

2010

Agent	Rockstar
Batman: Arkham Asylum 2	Warner
Brink	Bethesda
Castlevania: LOS	Konami
Crysis 2	EA
Dead Rising 2	Capcom
Dead Space 2	EA
Deus Ex 3	Square Enix
Enslaved	Namco Bandai
Fallout: New Vegas	Bethesda
Final Fantasy XIV	Square Enix
Gran Turismo 5	Sony
Homefront	THQ
Kane and Lynch 2	Square Enix
Lego Harry Potter	Warner
Max Payne 3	Rockstar
Medal of Honor	EA
Rage	Bethesda
Spec Ops	2K Games
Skate 3	EA
Star Wars: Force Unleashed 2	Activision
The Last Guardian	Sony
Warhammer 40K Space Marine	THQ

Back issues
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Update a classic

Love a classic game but can't find its modern equivalent? Read on...

Why didn't anyone buy...?

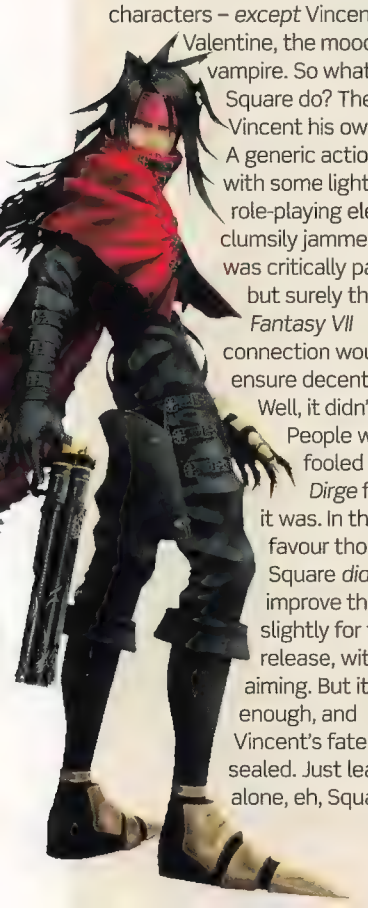
Final Fantasy VII Dirge of Cerberus

Pub Square | **Dev** Square **PSM**81 51%

Over nine million people own a copy of *Final Fantasy VII*. That's a *lot*, and Square Enix know it. So in the latter part of the two-thousands they started the 'Compilation of *Final Fantasy VII*' project; a series of spin-off games and movies designed to extend the game's storyline. Or, if you want to be more cynical about it, to extort money from fans. Regardless of their intent, *Dirge of Cerberus* blew.

People loved *Final Fantasy VII* because it was a big, sprawling RPG with a weird, wonderful cast of characters – *except* Vincent Valentine, the moody emo vampire. So what did Square do? They gave Vincent his own game. A generic action romp with some light role-playing elements clumsily jammed in. It was critically panned, but surely the *Final Fantasy VII* connection would ensure decent sales? Well, it didn't.

People weren't fooled and saw *Dirge* for what it was. In their favour though, Square *did* improve the game slightly for the PAL release, with better aiming. But it wasn't enough, and Vincent's fate was sealed. Just leave *FFVII* alone, eh, Square?

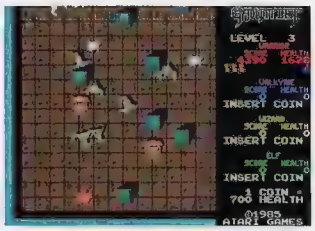


Like that?

Gauntlet

What is it? One of the world's first dungeon crawlers, *Gauntlet* sees you selecting one of four characters – Thor, Merlin, Thyra or Questor – and hacking and slashing your way through hordes of ghosts and monsters. Your goal is simple: defeat the ghouls, grab the keys and get to the next floor.

Why is it a classic? Because as well as the action, there's also a cerebral element to *Gauntlet* that comes into its own in co-op multi-player. Enemies will constantly chase you, so you have to corner them, or funnel them to a certain area, before killing them safely. Mess up and you'll get overrun and die a horrible, pixelated death. It's dated, but available on the PSN store.



ACTION

Try this... **Dark Mist**

Format PS3 **Release** 2007

How is it similar? For top-down arcade dungeon crawling, PSN's *Dark Mist* is your best bet. It's a defiantly old-school action game that sees you battling creatures using the power of light. It's a great looking game too, with colourful, stylish anime-style visuals. Not PSN's best offering though.

ACTION-RPG

Try this... **Dragon Age**

Format PS3 **Release** 2009

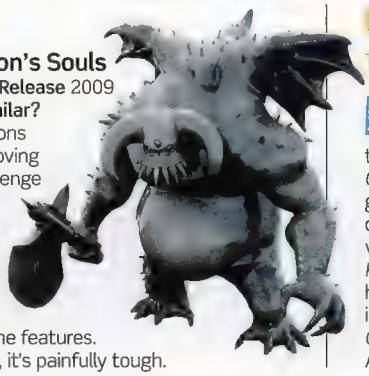
How is it similar? Both games have a Dungeons & Dragons inspired high fantasy setting, but the comparisons don't end there. *Gauntlet* let you play as a warrior, an elf or a wizard, which are some of the starting classes and races in BioWare's maligned, but undoubtedly epic, RPG.

SOULS

Try this... **Demon's Souls**

Format PS3 **Release** 2009

How is it similar? If the dungeons of *Dark Mist* are proving too simplistic, challenge yourself with this cult hit. It features a similar Western fantasy setting, but with a Japanese twist and innovative online features. Be warned, though, it's painfully tough.



CO-OP

Try this... **Fat Princess**

Format PS3 **Release** 2009

How is it similar? The closest thing you'll get to player versus player *Gauntlet* on PS3. Both games share the same cartoonish medieval visual style but *Fat Princess* has you battling hordes of gamers instead of *Gauntlet*'s AI drones.

---

eBay Going, Going, Gone

Final Fantasy special

Final Fantasy VII scarf

Just like the one Cloud never wore in *Final Fantasy VII*. It features the logo for spin-off movie Advent Children, as well as Cloud's wolf emblem. Perfect for those dark, winter nights when nobody can see you replaying *VII*. Looks pretty warm though, and it is under a fiver.

Buy it now £4.24
How Many Left 1
Link bit.ly/7YDj2y

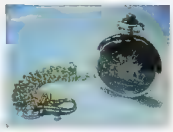
Final Fantasy VII yaoi doujinshi book

Doujinshi is manga lovingly crafted by fans of a game or TV series, in this case *FFVII*. What's yaoi? Well, you might want to Google that one when nobody's watching. It's, er, something for the girls...

First bid 99p
How Many Left 1
Link bit.ly/6D5ZQQ

Final Fantasy X-2 pocket watch (with chain)

There's nothing more gentlemanly than strolling down the street, twirling your pocket watch by its chain. Now you can experience this sophisticated thrill, but with *Final Fantasy* branding. Just like you've always dreamed. Very shiny.



Buy it now £3.99
How Many Left 1
Link bit.ly/8gqMgo

HDTV of the Month

A feature-packed, reasonably priced 1080p set from Samsung

Samsung LE32B550

This modest set doesn't skimp on features. It has edge enhancement options and a black booster, and motion blur is reduced thanks to Samsung's Digital Nature Image Engine. A great entry-level set at a decent price.

Price £600 | **Size** 32"
Native Resolution 1920 x 1080 | **1080p** Yes
Connections HDMI x3, PC input x1, RGB SCART x2, component x1, USB connectivity.
Web www.samsung.com

On a Budget

Trump or tramp? Here's the telly for you...

Pioneer Kuro PDP-LX6090
Amazing depth, detail and blacks. One of the best TVs on the market, but the stand, speakers and wallmount are optional extras.
Price £3500 | **Size** 60" | **1080p** Yes
Connections 3 x Scart, 3 x HDMI, USB, component, composite

Sony KDL-40V5500
A stunning picture, superb sound and internet connectivity all inside this subtly stylish set.
Price £750 | **Size** 40" | **1080p** Yes
Connections 4x HDMI, 2x Scart, component, composite, Ethernet, Optical Out, USB.

Toshiba 32AV635DB
Packs in plenty of features at a great price – the screen won't match the top-range TVs, but for this price it's a good bet.
Price £350 | **Size** 32" | **1080p** No
Connections 4x HDMI, 2x Scart, PC input, USB

Gadget Round Up

Technological goodness available

Headset Jabra BT125
Price £10 | **Web** amazon.co.uk
It's not the flashiest headset, but when it costs just £10, you can't complain. We still prefer the official one if you can afford to spend £30, though.

Datel Wireless Keyboard
Price £18 | **Web** amazon.co.uk
It's wireless, it's a keyboard and it resembles the design aesthetic of the PS3. If you're doing a lot of typing then pick up one of these.

3 in 1 Media Remote
Price £20 | **Web** amazon.co.uk
This is a fully functional remote, but it slides open to reveal two analogue sticks and a qwerty keyboard. An impressive party piece.

Technology questions

The stuff you need to know

I've run out of space on my hard drive. How much is it going to cost for an upgrade to a bigger unit?
It's probably a lot cheaper and easier than you think. You'll be needing a 2.5" Internal SATA drive. Look online and you should be able to find a 320Gb one for about £40 – lots of them are advertised to emphasise compatibility with PS3. Be careful when you remove the old fastenings though. We've heard a few horror stories of chewed up screw heads

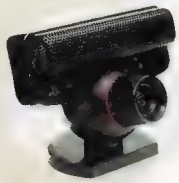
How do I play movies from a flash drive on my PS3?

Your PS3 won't recognise every single type of video file that you throw at it but it can handle the most common formats. If you are using WMA files then you'll need to go to Settings/System Settings and Enable WMA Playback before your PS3 will play them. You might need to press △ on the drive and select "Show all" for them to be displayed in the first place though.

Can I play PSP games online through my PS3's connection?
If you can successfully connect your PS3 to a wireless router you shouldn't have any difficulty getting your PSP online by using the same network. Even better, you can use Ad Hoc Party to use the local wireless features of your PSP to play against people across the world. The free application recently got released on the European store and is proving very popular with *Monster Hunter* fans. It has a sleek interface and supports PS3 voice/text chat.

I want to change my PS3 username and don't mind spending money for the privilege if need be.
At present there's no way to change your PSN name. You can change the individual title on the user accounts of your PS3, but it won't change the tag that appears above your head in lobbies or during matches online. We're hoping for more friendly options soon.

Can I use any USB camera for video and voice chat?
Most USB cameras are compatible with the PS3's built-in video chat but if you're thinking of *LBP*, sticker creation is only possible if you splash the cash on an official PlayStation Eye camera. It does come with a handy mic too though, so you'll be able to natter away without buying a separate in-ear headset.



Can I charge my controller via a PS3 in standby mode?
If you're using your console to charge pads, you'll have to leave it on. Alternatively, plug the USB cable into a PC, Mac, alternate console or dedicated mains charger.

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Blu-ray Movies

Zombie survival, drug binges, life-changing journeys, and Arnie...

Walking dead It's no Shaun of the Dead, but Zombieland is a fresh, funny take on the zombie genre.

© Columbia Pictures

Zombieland

Disc Details
Release Out now
RRP £24.99
Discs 1
Aspect Ratio 2.35:1
Audio DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1
Extras Two commentary tracks, 'In Search of Zombieland' documentary, deleted scenes

Film Details
Cert 15
Run Time 88 mins
Year 2009
Director Ruben Fleischer
Stars, Woody Harrelson, Jesse Eisenberg, Emma Stone, Bill Murray

Rule 31 of surviving a zombie apocalypse: always check the back seat. Just one of the pearls of wisdom dispensed by this raucous, movie-savvy black comedy. Zombieland is light on plot, but that doesn't matter; its distinction is that it's *funny* – all the way through. Woody Harrelson is brilliant as snakeskin cowboy Tallahassee ("He's in the ass kicking business, and business is good.") and the script's enthusiasm is infectious. As for extras, exclusive to the Blu-ray version is 'Beyond the Graveyard' – a picture-in-picture commentary track. There's also a fun and revealing regular track with actors Woody Harrelson and Jesse Eisenberg, director Ruben Fleischer, and writers Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick. 'In Search of Zombieland' is a fairly standard behind the scenes documentary, and there's a selection of deleted scenes, as well as the now standard digital copy for your iPod or PSP. It's a decent selection of special features, and the transfer is great, making the film look especially vibrant in HD. Zombieland is one of the better Hollywood comedies of the year, and rarely has society's total meltdown been such knockabout fun. Oh, and look out for the excellent Bill Murray cameo. **Extras**

Infected The zombies are infected with a mutated version of mad cow disease.

Also available...

Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas

Price £24.99
Stars Johnny Depp, Benicio Del Toro

A drug-fuelled adventure in the city of sin, based on Hunter S. Thompson's legendary novel.
Extras 'On Location Spotlight', deleted scenes, alternate ending

Last Action Hero

Price £24.99
Stars Arnold Schwarzenegger, Ian McKellen

A kid obsessed with action movie star Jack Slater (Arnie) gets sucked into one his movies. Cue fourth wall-shattering and self-referential humour.
Extras 'Movie IQ'

Up

Price £24.99
Stars Edward Asner, Christopher Plummer

A heartwarming adventure about an old man and his life-long ambition to fly.
Extras Commentary, eight documentaries, animated shorts, bundled DVD and digital copies of the film

Only PSM3 brings you...

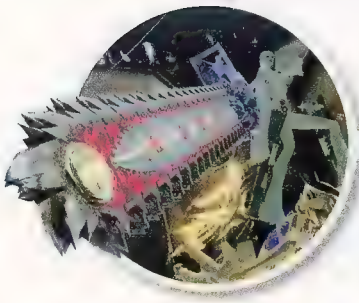
5 things to remember this month

Fallout: New Vegas
"The game's structure is branching. You have genuine choice when it comes to creating your own story in the world"
page 22

God of War 3
"Dynamic environments mean the developers can turn thousand-foot plus creatures into living environments"
page 8

Gran Turismo 5
"For sheer scale of ambition, *GT5* won't just surpass its racing rivals: it'll leave them on the start line"
page 46

Heavy Rain
"Tragic, sexy and totally unforgettable. You've never played a game like *Heavy Rain* before, but it's not without its flaws"
page 80



Bayonetta top ten
"*Bayonetta* develops into the most fluid and ferocious fighting machine you'll ever control in gaming"
page 100

Next issue on sale Thursday March 11

1. ***God of War 3* - The big review**
2. ***Prince of Persia: Forgotten Sands*** - Exclusive new info on the Prince's return to form, plus developer Q&A.
3. **Indie games** - Why the best independent devs turn to PS3, plus how to get your own game on PSN.
4. ***Just Cause 2*** - We review the impossibly huge island-hopping adventure.
5. **Ten things you might have missed in *Heavy Rain*** - get more from Sony's weird, wonderful crime thriller.

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Worst. Compo. Ever.

The least valuable gaming tat in the PSM3 office could be *yours*!

And we're definitely *not* just trying to clear out the office. Your prize mound will include... **(1) Saints Row 2 hoodie** Wear this outside and become literally the worst person in the world. **(2) Model Ferrari** Like a real Ferrari, but in a box. And not that real. **(3) Fairytale Fights tee** Barely good enough for a duster. **(4) Dark Void bag** Nothing says 'Avoid me' like a satchel with a game logo on it. **(5) Devil May Cry 4 strategy guide** In case you didn't finish it three years ago. **(6) Tomb Raider: Legend strategy guide** Good for stoking a fire. **(7) Bourne Conspiracy diary** Just like Bourne never uses. **(8) Scarface In Your Pocket** No swearing? All his best lines are swears. **(9) King of Fighters statue** Don't be fooled: this is pig ugly. **(10) Assassin's Creed 2 art book** Full of amazing spelling errors. **(11) Call of Duty playing cards** Daft. **(12) Dragon Age inflatable sword** Wield this, and slay your self-respect. **(13) Scarface: Money. Power. Respect** Worst. PSP. Game. Ever. **(14) Destroy All Humans! CD** Destroy Your Ears! **(15) Assorted gaming tees** Honestly the worst t-shirts ever designed. **(16) DJ Hero shades** Like Kanye West wears. But he's a fashionable millionaire rapper. Are you? **(17) 10x Crash Racing demo discs** For PS2. **(18) DVD** Learn how to do stupid football tricks and impress literally no one. **(19) UFC grill** When Pearl Drops just aren't doing the trick.

Want all this? *Really*? Then answer the following question:

Q. The star of *Tomb Raider* is... **A.** David Cameron **B.** Lara Croft **C.** A fridge.

To enter, text PSM3TAT followed by a space and your answer to 87474. Texts cost 50p plus std network rate. Or send an e-mail to **psm3@futurenet.com** subject 'Give me tat'.

Amazing! If you win, think about the next time you move house and have to cart all this guff around with you.

Wow! You could always just donate it to a charity shop. But even they might refuse to take it.

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